The Black Cat

SEPTEMBER 1909

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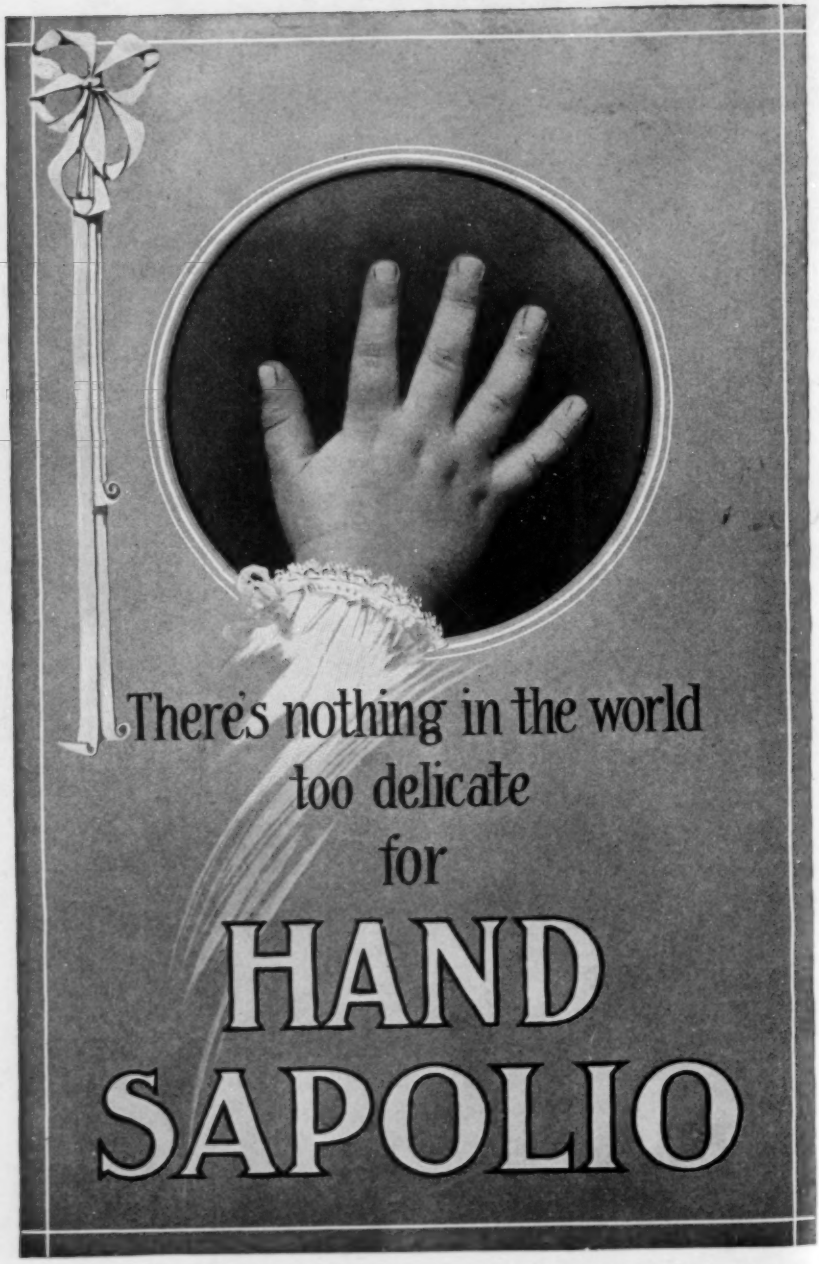
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The Black Cat

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The Treasure of the Desert.*

BY DONALD KENNICOTT.

RAIN was falling over the Painted Desert — the first rain worthy of the name in two years. A few days, and little yellow primroses would be sprouting from the crannies of the rocks; the Navajos at Cañon de Chelly would be drilling holes deep in the sand to plant their corn; the Mormon sheep-ranchers along the northern border would even drift their herds a little way into the desert itself. Yet rain may also be of paramount interest to persons whose occupation is distinctly not agricultural. Hump Jetthro, for instance, the ragged little cripple who swept out the Gold-Bug Saloon at Tuba City, had become animated by a strange excitement.

All day Jetthro had endeavored by an elaborate assumption of listlessness to disguise his inward perturbation. All night, after other people were in bed, he had bustled about in a fever of excited preparation. And an hour before dawn, in a cold, diminishing drizzle, he mounted his little pinto pony and silently took his departure from Tuba City. His equipment had its significance: a big canteen and a pair of field-glasses hung from his saddlehorn; rolled up in a gunny-sack behind him, was a week's provision; in a holster under his left arm hung a good long gun; and tucked away securely in his breast pocket, was the diagonally

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torn half of a sheet of paper, scrawled over curiously with figures and measurements.

When well out of town, Jetthro unbuttoned his oilskin slicker and his coat, then reaching down the back of his neck, drew out from under his shirt, a roll of rags. He straightened up in the saddle, stretched his arms from the shoulder, and with difficulty repressed a mad shout of exultation. When one has been a hunchback for three years, it is an almost overwhelming relief to become thus suddenly cured; by way of celebration, Jetthro took a little nip from the flask in his pocket. He then settled back snugly into his oilskin, peered warily out into the darkness from under his dripping sombrero, and chuckled with a certain savage hilarity.

Jetthro had other reasons for joy also. First and foremost, it had rained in the Painted Desert, and rain there meant much to him. It meant for one thing, that the tracks of his horse were even now being obliterated behind him. That was important, but what was still more vital to his enterprise, it meant that far out in the middle of the desert, in a certain hollow of the rocks known to him, there would have collected a pool of water — perhaps more, perhaps less, but in any event enough to sustain him and his horse while he transacted important business in that neighborhood. Jetthro chuckled again as he thought of what that business was; and as the first streak of gray glimmered in the east, though the drizzle had hardly stopped, he pulled off his hat, and with his head thrown well back snuffed the rare scent of wet earth luxuriously. "Little drops of water," he piped in a thin, cracked voice — "Little grains of sand — Makes the mighty ocean — *And* the pleasant land."

Song and hilarity had been somewhat rare with Hump Jetthro for the past three years, although during all that time, he had been a rich man — had owned a half share in a store of minted gold and printed bank-notes that should have opened to him all the steaming flesh-pots of San Francisco. And yet — so curious and unkindly are the caprices of Fate — all this time he had been compelled meanly to scratch and scrape to keep himself alive, while he waited for rain in the Painted Desert.

For it was three years since that, assisted by a great hulking oaf of a Swede named Pete Thulin, Jetthro had successfully

" stuck up " the express agent at Henryville and had fled into the desert with forty thousand dollars in currency stuffed into a pair of shaggy goat-skin saddle-bags. The two had been close-pressed by a hard riding posse, and fearing capture with the damning money upon them, had " cached " it under a boulder half way across the desert. They had recorded the exact location of this boulder by an elaborate series of measurements from an easily recognizable " comb " of lava rock, had noted down the figures on a sheet of paper, and then in order that neither might come back to retrieve his fortune without the other, they had torn this " key " diagonally in half and each taken a portion. Then the better to elude their pursuers, they had parted company and ridden hard in opposite directions.

Each had made his escape safely enough, but on rejoining each other at an appointed rendezvous a month later, trouble had developed. Jetthro had wanted to go back for the loot immediately, but the canny Swede had insisted that they wait at least a year. They had parted after a bitter wrangle; and Jetthro, moved partly by resentment and partly by avarice, after removing himself to a safe distance and assuming a thoroughly deceptive disguise, had by means of a cleverly managed anonymous letter, denounced Thulin to the authorities. The Swede had been forthwith captured, tried and convicted; he now reposed safely within stone walls; and yet never, so far as Jetthro could learn from newspaper accounts of the trial, had he " blown on " his partner. He was a strange man — that Thulin.

Jetthro had no notion of what the Swede had done with his half of the " key " either, yet as he rode out of Tuba City that morning, he had very little doubt of his ability to find the treasure. The figures in his possession would locate it within a mile or two, and with water to sustain him, he could simply work over the ground until he found the *cache*. It was under a big white boulder, he remembered, about three miles from the water-hole. It was true that there were a thousand other big white boulders just like it on the slope where it lay — he remembered that in the distance, they had looked like a great flock of sheep scattered out to feed — but with time at his disposal, he could turn them over one by one if necessary.

Noon found the rejuvenated cripple under a cleared sky and glaring sun, well out into the solitude of the Painted Desert. At nightfall he had gained the lava rock district. At noon of the second day he led his horse down a little rocky valley and found the water-hole, as he had anticipated, well filled. Gallons and gallons of it there were, cool, clear rain-water. He drank heavily, unbridled his horse, and as the beast dropped its muzzle to the pool, he sighed with satisfaction and commenced filling his pipe. The next instant he jumped back as if from a rattlesnake, and mechanically snatched at the weapon hidden under his left arm. There in the mud at the edge of the pool was the freshly made imprint of a man's foot.

After a breathless moment, Jetthro crept closer and knelt over the foot-print — a Crusoe who had discovered a fellow being on this island of the desert. It was the track of a large, heavy man, whose shoes were nearly worn out; the heel was much indented as if he carried his weight well back. Jetthro knew a man whose track was like this; that man was safe inside prison walls, and yet — Jetthro fingered his pistol nervously and peered about him with the quick, furtive eyes of a rat.

Presently he crept to the top of the nearest ridge. Through his field-glasses, he thence commanded a wide stretch of country — a primordial landscape of bare, volcanic rock, broken into countless crags and cliffs and chasms. Nowhere was there any living thing to be seen; there came to him not the slightest sound; and yet that new made foot-print in the mud by the water-hole —

Jetthro squared his shoulders, and in a conscious effort to drive away his timidity, laughed aloud. He returned to the pool, picketed his horse, devoured a heartening luncheon. Then after taking another look at the triangular bit of paper the image of which was already indelibly engraved upon his brain, he set off on foot toward the Valley of the White Boulders. He arrived thither without mistake, about mid-afternoon. He had met no one and heard nothing. When he topped the last intervening "comb," however, he started back abruptly, and snatched at his pistol again. At least a third of the boulders on the slope below him had been recently overturned.

Yet there was no one in sight, and after a moment of hesitation,

in a frenzy of fear lest the treasure had already been carried off, Jetthro hurried down among the rocks and ran from one boulder to another. He examined each one of those overturned, and then heaved a great sigh of relief. None of them quite answered the description; none of them covered a little hollow where a smaller stone had been removed to afford space for the *cache;* he was yet in time.

Without pausing to rest, he attacked the other boulders, and in a passion of anxiety fell to turning them over. He was a small man and it proved an infinitely laborious task; Thulin had done the lifting when they made the *cache*. It was near the middle of the slope if he remembered rightly; yet he could not be sure, for three years will distort one's recollections a good deal, and the stones, too, were all depressingly similar. He had examined perhaps twenty of them, when darkness overtook him unawares — a murky, starless darkness, the aftermath of the rain.

It would be almost impossible to get back to his horse and blankets now, and Jetthro had no mind to risk breaking his neck or losing himself among the sudden chasms of the rocks. Collapsing from fatigue, he huddled up behind a big boulder and passed the night there, now dosing, now starting up in a panic at some nightmare of attack. With the first gleam of light, he rose and tried to resume his search, but finding himself too weak with hunger and too fevered with thirst to continue, reluctantly set out back toward the pool.

The sun was only just up when he arrived there — and yet Mystery had again been before him. His horse, its skull crushed in as if under the hammer of a Titan, lay where he had tethered it. Its belly had been ripped open and a huge chunk of the loin hacked away. And there were more tracks — the footprints of a large man who carried his weight well back — in the mud at the edge of the fast-diminishing pool.

Jetthro made a further examination — and more discoveries; his canteen and the bulk of his provisions were gone. The man must have left within a very short time, and yet even to an experienced searcher, the bare rocks beyond the pool betrayed neither the direction of his coming nor of his going. Jetthro choked with anger; yet the uncanny silence and secrecy of his assailant cooled

his wrath with a sharp chill of fear. His enemy might even now be lurking behind some rock, waiting for a chance to shoot him. From the top of the ridge, he again searched the vicinity warily with his field-glasses, but could see nothing — except a tiny black speck in the distant sky that marked the swift approach of a buzzard toward the carcass of his horse.

Hump Jetthro debated a moment with himself, then returned to the water, drank, and made a meal from the remnant of his scattered provision. Then with his pistol drawn in his hand, he turned back again toward the Valley of the Boulders. It was Thulin who had done this, he was sure; there could be no other. The big Swede must have watched for rain also; must have escaped from his prison at Yuma, traveled on the truck of some freight car to Williams or Manzanilla, and then made his way — on foot apparently — to carry off the *cache*. He must have hidden when he saw Jetthro coming and passed him behind some sheltering ridge. The puzzling thing was that Thulin had not murdered him. Perhaps he had no fire-arms. If that were the case — Jetthro's jaw set hard and he trod stealthily, with roving, wary eyes.

Cannily making a detour this time, he approached the Valley of the Boulders from the opposite direction. He stopped to reconnoitre at each elevation, and moved with the slowness of extreme caution, but at last was able to peep over the edge of a rock on the farther side of the valley. And from there, even with the naked eyes, he could see a tiny figure moving about on the opposite slope. The field-glasses made the picture clearer. It was Thulin, sure enough — a ragged, hatless, shock-headed Thulin, bending and heaving and toiling about among the boulders like a laborious Berserker. On the ground beside him, were the stolen canteen and provision sack. In overturning the boulders, he wielded what appeared to be an iron bar.

Jetthro watched him for a moment, then put down the glasses. Next he pulled off his boots, wrapped a dirty handkerchief about his gun to hide its glitter, crept out on hands and knees from his place of concealment, and commenced worming his way in and out among the boulders down the slope. He had stalked antelope in his time; he knew that he must get very close to make a sure

shot with a pistol. Now he crawled slowly along on his belly, now passed an open space with a quick, silent rush; now halted motionless, intent, bead-eyed, savage.

The heat of the sun on the rocks almost blistered his hands as he crawled; the glare half blinded him; the silence was so perfect that even at that distance, he feared that his hard breathing would betray him. He had gained the bottom of the valley and had just crept under the grateful shadow of a big rock on the opposite slope, when a sudden, almost intolerable stab of pain shot through his foot and brought him to a terror-smitten halt. It was as if a subtile, envenomed needle had been driven into him; a wave of agony followed, flooding up his leg to the knee, and he knew before he looked about, what had caused it — a great, whip-tailed scorpion that he had disturbed and that had driven its sting so deep into his unprotected ankle that it hung there by its own weapon, struggling hideously.

Jetthro wrapped his hand in his hat and crushed the creature, then jerked out its barbed sting. He knew that the wound would not be fatal, but he knew also that the anguish would endure for days and that his foot would swell very badly, so that he couldn't walk. And Thulin had killed his horse —

For a moment or two, Jetthro writhed about on the ground there; then controlling himself, he peeped out from behind the boulder at Thulin. The Swede had dropped the iron bar, and was kneeling over something on the ground — a shaggy, goat-skin saddle-bag.

Jetthro remembered that saddle-bag well, and what it contained. He stared for an instant, his teeth grinding together as he saw the Swede tying the bag over his shoulder. Then in a frenzy of rage and pain and disappointment, he flung up his pistol and fired. Thulin jumped to one side at the shot, snatched up his iron bar, and looked about him desperately, this way and that. Jetthro rested the pistol on the rock and fired again. This time the Swede saw him, but instead, as he had hoped, of charging at him in a mad Berserk rage, Thulin whirled about and made off, running and dodging among the boulders in the direction of the water-hole.

Jetthro emptied his pistol at the retreating figure, at each shot,

taking aim carefully. Once the Swede dropped, but was up again in a flash. Very soon he had passed altogether out of sight.

Reloading his weapon, Jetthro ran a little way after him. Then, unable to bear the pain of his weight on the poisoned foot, dropped to his knees and proceeded as best he might in that fashion. Near the place where Thulin had found the *cache,* he came upon a little package of bank-notes that had fallen from the saddle-bag. and pocketed them eagerly. Then leaving the canteen and the provisions where they lay, he set out after Thulin again. And soon he came upon that which sent through him a thrill of savage joy — a drop of blood on the rocks.

As he proceeded, the blood-spots gradually increased in frequency and presently became a trail of great, horrible splotches. Yet Jetthro could follow but very slowly, for his leg was now swollen to the knee and he could only drag himself clumsily along by crawling on his belly with his wounded limb resting on the other. He stuck to the pursuit, however, — a wolf wounded, yet hot and merciless on the slot of its quarry.

Straight back to the water-hole, the trail led. When, close on sun-down, after some hours of almost unendurable effort, Jetthro came near the place, seven big turkey-buzzards flapped squawking into the air, six from one place, one from another. Peering over the edge of the last ridge, he could see the carcass of his horse, already picked to the white, staring bones. At the edge of the water-hole lay another body. Jetthro crawled down to it.

Thulin lay on his back in the stiffening mud at the edge of the pool. One of his eyes had already been torn out, and the clothing — a striped prison suit, half hidden by a ragged pair of overalls and jumper — was soaked with blood from a bullet wound in the loins. The goat-skin saddle-bag slung to his shoulder had burst open; five bright gold-pieces had been spilled out.

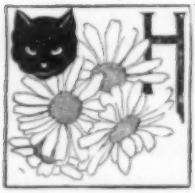
Yet Jetthro noted none of these things particularly. What he saw was that in the Swede's outstretched hand was clutched his big tin cup; that the rocks round about were still moist with recently evaporating water; that the pool itself was dry — dry! The Swede had bailed out the water and wasted it; lying there in his death struggle, Thulin had beaten him. His horse was dead;

he was sixty miles from other water; he could hardly so much as crawl, unaided.

Jetthro lay still for a time. Presently a black shadow passed over him and he heard a raucous scream as the buzzard that had risen from Thulin's body descended again, impatient and unafraid. Its black, loathsome wing brushed against him as with outstretched claws, it alighted on its prey.

Nip and Tuck.*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.



HE had told her he was an orange grower; and he had told her, too, that he had a charming little bungalow amid the foothills of the Sierra Madre, where they would make their nest, he and she. But he had not told her that he was a widower, and that the California nest already contained three boys and a girl.

Oliver Nip had heard somewhere that self-preservation is the first law of nature, and as he knew — from the moment he first set his eyes on her — that he could not live without Maria Tuck, he considered himself justified under the law in withholding these particular facts. It was not that Maria had declared or even intimated that she would not marry a widower with children; but Oliver was *taking no chances*. Instinctively he felt that if Maria knew the whole story, it would require something more attractive than Oliver Nip's clumsy and homely personality, with all his oranges and all his dollars, to induce her to assume the parentage of four ready-made Nips. Oliver was not born with an eye to the value of children. "The fewer the better," expressed his opinion of the subject; and as Maria was a woman after his own heart — which could not be said with equal frankness of his first venture, — he could not but feel that she shared this opinion with him. At all events, he was engineering his courtship upon this assumption; and while, out of respect to his religion, he was careful to tell her no fibs, he nevertheless showed himself an expert in that form of diplomacy which the lawyers call *suppressio veri* — suppression of the truth; a trick by which one produces the effect desired and saves his conscience at the same time.

He had met Maria at Atlantic City. She had lost her hus-

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band, Tobias Tuck, only the year before. She was still in mourning for him; not because she had loved Tobias particularly, but because it was the custom and because she felt so sorry for herself. And it was Oliver's sympathy for her that had won her heart, in the first place; and it was largely his glowing pictures of California and substantial evidence of a generous bank account, that, in the second place, had won her hand. She had had a hard life with Tobias, she confessed to Oliver, and to exchange it now for a life amid oranges and roses and perpetual spring, was to her a vision of exceeding great joy and an inspiration to a ready acceptance of Oliver's suggestion that they cut short their engagement and enter into matrimonial happiness without further waiting.

Therefore, though their meeting and acquaintance and betrothal were all compassed within the space of three weeks, Oliver's infatuation and Maria's readiness — combined with the seductive influence of murmuring waves and bathing suits and lonely sands — had accomplished as much toward a true understanding as a year and a half of formal love-making.

And so, the wedding took place; quietly and unannounced, in the clergyman's back parlor, with only the clergyman's sister and two or three accommodating hotel guests as witnesses. And Oliver now had his Maria, safe and sure; and as they got into the carriage, to start forth on their honeymoon — a journey that was to take them first for a visit to her home in Virginia and then by gentle stages to his home and the bungalow in California, — he told her he was the happiest man on the face of the earth. But he wasn't; and he knew he wasn't.

The realization that he had deceived her came upon him with sudden and depressing force. He had thought it would be an easy matter to explain the situation to her as soon as she was securely his; but he found now he had overestimated his courage and ability. What if it should cost him her love and respect? What could he do if she should make a scene? Suppose she should leave him! Why, O why, had he not told her at once? Then it would have been easy. Now, the task loomed before him desperate and gigantic. It was inevitable; there was no alternative; he must tell her. But he would promise her anything:

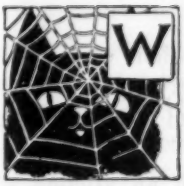
the children should be sent away, to boarding-school, to the reformatory — anywhere at all; and if that would not suffice he would take them out and lose them in the mountains. It was Maria or nothing.

"Maria," he began, taking her hand and turning away his head; "Maria, dear, are — are you fond of children?"

Maria gave a start and drew away. "I — I don't know for sure what you're drivin' at, Oliver," she stammered; "but — I reckon I might as well tell you right now, instead of keepin' it any longer as a surprise, that I've got seven of 'em — five boys and two girls — and the finest lot of young ones you ever saw; and they're all a-waitin' now to see their new pa."

The Man Who Moved a Town.*

BY FRANK X. FINNEGAN.



HEN Sylvester Grubb pulled up his sleepy livery stable nag in front of the Central House in Lynchville, after a tiresome ten-mile drive over country roads, he was hungry, dusty and mad clear through. Nothing had gone well with him from the moment he had set out from Stevensburg to reach the little town which dozed the days away quite comfortably on the river bank, without taking much thought of the great world a few hours' journey from its muddy streets and dingy, old-fashioned buildings.

There was no railroad connection between Lynchville and the rest of civilization, the river and the highways meeting the needs of the town in the way of transportation as they had done since the first cabin was built there sixty years before, but of this fact Sylvester Grubb was fully aware — in fact it was the main reason for his presence in the community. The Stevensburg livery man, however, had contributed to Grubb's unpleasant frame of mind by furnishing him with a broken-down horse which developed strong prejudices against going to Lynchville at all and positively refused to go there at anything approaching the rate of speed which the traveler thought desirable; the ancient side-bar buggy which was the only vehicle available was a springless rattle-trap which nearly shook Mr. Grubb's teeth loose as it bumped over the ruts in the execrable road and he traveled in a cloud of dust which hung about him like a snowstorm while he chirruped and stormed and swore at the plodding horse.

Therefore it was with a sigh of relief that he climbed down from the rig in front of the dejected-looking hotel, feeling that his troubles were over for a time, at least. Lynchville did not

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promise much to a city man on first view, but the very sign-board of the Central House seemed to spell food and rest and sleep, and these necessities were uppermost in Sylvester Grubb's desires when he walked into the hotel office. The proprietor, lolling in a comfortable arm-chair near the key rack, greeted the stranger with a curt and rather lazy nod, but did not take the trouble to rise.

"Howdy," he grunted and returned to the silent contemplation of a horse auction bill which had apparently engrossed his attention when Grubb entered, although it had been hanging on the wall since the year before.

"Good evening," responded the arrival with an attempt at cheerfulness, "I want a nice, quiet room and a big hot supper just as soon as I can get them. Beastly drive over here from Stevensburg, isn't it?"

"I reckon it is," admitted the hotel man, shifting to a more comfortable position in his chair, "but I ain't driven over there in the last eight or ten years. I manage to get along all right here in Lynchville. We don't wish to care about movin' around much."

There was a silence for a few moments while Grubb pawed around among the newspapers and last year's calendars on the desk looking for the hotel register. Then the hotel man, who had been idly watching the search, ventured to make a suggestion.

"Reckon you're lookin' for the register," he said, "but there ain't no sort of use of you registerin'. Fact is, we're full up."

The expectant guest turned on him in amazement, his hopes of a good night's sleep dropping to zero.

"Do you mean to say you haven't got a room?" he demanded.

"That's just what I'm tellin' you, stranger," said the proprietor blandly, "there ain't room to tuck away another soul under this roof to-night. You see, we ain't got so very many rooms first off and then, besides, this is court day and the town is pretty well filled up. Pretty well filled," he repeated, half closing his eyes and twirling his thumbs in blissful contentment.

Sylvester Grubb, accustomed to getting what he wanted when he wanted it, snorted with impatience and restrained with dif-

ficulty a growing desire to jerk the hotel man out of his complacent attitude and wake him up to a realization of the situation.

"Well, I'll have supper, anyhow," he said, "and see what I can do about a room somewhere else later on."

The hotel man slowly sat up, yawned and stretched his fat arms, after which he contemplated the impatient Mr. Grubb with a beaming smile.

"You're a little bit late for supper," he announced, "supper is off at 7 o'clock. We eat early here in Lynchville — ain't got into them city ways yet, like they've got at Stevensburg."

"Great Scott!" yelled Grubb, "can't I get anything to eat either? What sort of a town is this, anyhow?"

"This is a pretty good town, stranger," said the Boniface in an injured tone, "but, you know, we can't be servin' meals here at all hours of the night. It must be more'n half past seven, ain't it?"

As Grubb turned away from the desk with murder in his heart the door swung open and two villagers slowly sauntered in, looked the distracted stranger over with interest, nodded to him in friendly fashion and leaned an elbow apiece upon the desk.

"Evenin,' Mr. Hopkins," said the taller of the two, looking toward the hotel man and industriously chewing a straw.

"Evenin', Jake," replied Hopkins, genially. "You don't happen to know where this gentleman could get some supper this hour o' the night, do you?"

Jake straightened up and looked at Mr. Grubb as solemnly as though that gentleman had inquired the chances for building a bridge across the river before morning. From his pocket he pulled out a ponderous-looking silver watch and studied it with interest. As the awful hour dawned upon him he looked graver than ever and slowly shook his head.

"I don't know," he said, doubtfully, "it's nearly a quarter to eight. I s'pose everything will be closed up. You don't know, do you Charlie?" he added suddenly to his silent companion, who had been solemnly studying Grubb with as much interest as though he had arrived in an aeroplane.

"I don't want to keep anybody up late," interjected Mr.

Grubb, with a tinge of sarcasm, "but it does seem to me that in a town of this size a man with money in his pocket ought to be able to get supper and lodging."

The three Lynchville citizens looked at one another sagely and then turned their glances again on the fidgeting stranger.

"Well, it's pretty late, you know," suggested Jake. "I closed up my livery stable before I came over here. Won't be no more goin' on no place to-night."

"Late nothing!" Grubb began stormily, when Charlie, who had been pondering on the problem intensely, suddenly betrayed a gleam of human intelligence.

"Widow Meehan's," he suggested, hopefully.

Proprietor Hopkins struck the office desk with his fist in his delight at the solution of the puzzle.

"That's the idea!" he declared, "the Widow Meehan can take you in. She's got two boarders," he added.

"An' one on 'ems a hand in the flour mill over here that works nights," said Jake, "an' gets his meals at onusual times. Wouldn't be surprised if she could pick you up a supper even this late."

"I hope so," grunted Mr. Grubb, "where does Mrs. Meehan live?"

"That's your buggy outside, ain't it?" asked Jake.

"It's the one I came here in," admitted the hungry traveler, "but you can bet it ain't mine — nor the horse, either."

"I'll drive you over to the widow's," suggested the livery man, "and I s'pose you'll want your rig put up for the night. I'll just take it along after I drop you there."

"If I didn't need it to get out of this confounded town to-morrow," snorted Grubb, "you could take it along and lose it for all I cared. Come on," and he started for the door.

Mine Host Hopkins was visibly perturbed by Mr. Grubb's animadversions on the thriving town of Lynchville and he felt that it devolved upon him to uphold its reputation.

"You shouldn't blame the town because you got in late," he suggested mildly, "this is a pretty good town, stranger, when it ain't so crowded."

"That's what it is," said silent Charlie, suddenly.

Irate Mr. Grubb stopped with his hand on the door latch and turned to face the indignant pair.

"Say, let me tell you something," he said, slowly and impressively, "I don't know whether you fellows want to risk any money or not, but I'll bet you $100 that one year from now this town won't be here!"

Hopkins blinked rapidly and looked at Charlie. Jake paused in his movement toward the door behind Mr. Grubb, the grin with which he had welcomed the defense of his town rapidly fading away. It took several seconds for the full import of what the stranger had said to filter through the sluggish minds of the natives and even then the hotel man did not believe he had heard aright.

"What's that?" he asked rather feebly, "the town won't be what?"

"It won't be here!" repeated Mr. Grubb, sternly, "that's what I said and that's what I meant. It will be gone — faded away — wiped off the map. And that's what it deserves!" he added.

Convinced at last that the prediction was as all-embracing as it had first seemed, the three startled residents of Lynchville decided that the hungry traveler was merely venting his wrath in this wild fashion and affected to make light of the matter.

"If I was a bettin' man I'd take you up on that, stranger," said Hopkins with a slow smile. "You must have a lot of hundreds to lose. Why, this town has been here for sixty-five years."

"It looks it," snapped Grubb.

"Who's goin' to wipe it off the map — that's what I want to know?" demanded Charlie, belligerently.

Mr. Grubb looked at them a moment from beneath his frowning brows and then turned again to the door.

"I am!" was his startling answer as he bolted out of the hotel and jumped into the buggy, leaving Hopkins and Charlie staring after him, and wondering whether it was quite safe for Jake to ride as far as the widow's with the crazy stranger.

When the Widow Meehan's excellent supper had been disposed of an hour or so later Sylvester Grubb sat in the widow's spare room and wrote a letter. That seemed an ordinary thing

for a visitor to do, but the residents of Lynchville, most of them already safe in bed, little dreamed that the fate of their sleepy old town hung upon the point of the pen that Mr. Grubb so vigorously drove over the paper. The letter was addressed to the president of a great trunk railroad that tapped the state in that section and was gradually spreading its tentacles in various directions that promised increased earnings.

The next morning Mr. Grubb's letter, with a score or 30 of others, went bumping over the road to Stevensburg in the mail carrier's wagon to catch the fast mail train that whisked through the town in the evening, while Mr. Grubb himself, behind the stubborn old livery nag, was pushing along the river road from Lynchville to Steuben, keeping an appreciative eye on the rich farms past which he slowly traveled. Mine Host Hopkins and silent Charlie and Jake, the livery man, would doubtless have gaped with amazement the next day had they been able to be present in the office of the railroad president to hear Lynchville discussed by that august official and a few of his directors.

"I think we'll make a slight change in the direction of that spur from Stevensburg," announced the president. "You may remember that we intended to run it along the river on the east side as far as Lynchville and put in the bridge there. See, here's Lynchville," and he shoved forward a map of the territory.

"What's the new idea?" asked one of the directors.

"Well, I've had Grubb down there for a week or two looking over the country in detail," continued the president, "and he advises me to-day that a point about two miles below Lynchville would be far more advantageous for the bridge, taking the natural conditions into account. Of course, we would have to skip Lynchville as a way station according to that arrangement, but from what Grubb reports, I don't think it would be much loss."

"I suppose not," admitted the director who was holding the map.

"The chances are that the location of the bridge a couple of miles from Lynchville would cause a new town to spring up almost immediately," suggested the other director. "Bridges are scarce in that country and as we will have a wagon drive

on our bridge, all the road traffic would be diverted to that point most probably."

"That's true," said the president, studying the map, "we might start a town by establishing a station there, for that matter. If it didn't sound so much like a joke we might name it in honor of our able special agent 'Grubbtown.'"

The directors dutifully joined in the president's laugh, the map was put away and the fate of Lynchville was sealed.

. . . . . .

Something less than a year later Sylvester Grubb dropped off a through train at Waynesville, the smart and thriving little town that clustered around the shining new brick station at one end of the big railroad bridge. Jake, the livery man, still chewing a straw, was on the platform clamoring for business with his hack line. On the opposite side of the track from the station towered a grain elevator at the door of which lounged its proprietor, silent Charlie. Jake halted Mr. Grubb with a yell of greeting.

"Hello, there!" he cried, "haven't seen you since I druv you to the Widow Meehan's for supper a year ago. Remember that?"

"You bet I do," said Grubb, cheerily, "and how are things going up in Lynchville?"

Jake grinned rather sheepishly.

"Well, to tell the truth, there ain't much left of Lynchville any more," he said, "the folks are all down here. You see, when the railroad come through it just naturally gave us the go-by and located down here at Waynesville."

"I see," said Mr. Grubb, gravely.

"Yes, and so, after we seen the town springin' up down here an' the business all comin' this way," continued Jake, "one by one we just decided there wasn't nothin' to do only to come down here to get it 'fore the other fellow got it all. So the town just naturally moved down here and closed up shop in Lynchville. I don't s'pose there's a dozen folks livin' up there now, leastways not any one that's tryin' to do any business. And that's how it is, you see."

"And how about my friend Hopkins?" asked Mr. Grubb, "is he still keeping the Central house where he can't serve supper after 7 o'clock?"

Once more Jake grinned.

"Come here," he said, taking Grubb by the elbow and leading him past the station. "You see that sign over there?"

Mr. Grubb looked across the street and beheld an illuminated sign: "Hotel Hopkins. Meals At All Hours."

"That's him," said Jake shortly.

"I wonder," said Grubb, after enjoying the spectacle for a few moments, "if Hopkins would pay me that $100 bet now in case he had taken me up a year ago."

Jake stared and then slapped his thigh.

"By cracky!" he ejaculated, "you did offer to bet him $100 that Lynchville would be wiped off the map in a year, didn't you! But then," he added, "you said *you'd* do it! That's where he'd have you, you know!"

The Inch That Counted.*

BY LISETTA MEGERLE.

SOME years ago, as I was journeying through a remote part of Spain, I chanced one day upon an old church. Its quaint and ancient appearance, made me curious as to what the interior might be. I passed to the rear and found to my delight an old padro, the care-taker, just ushering in a party of sightseers.

Without speaking to any one, I passed in, the old padro doubtless taking me for one of the party.

The church proved to be indeed beautiful. I lingered behind the others, as we passed from one interesting object to another, desiring to be alone, and enjoy the peace, quiet, and soothing influence always to be found in an old church.

Curiosity being soon satisfied here, the party passed out to explore other parts of the old building, but I remained to enjoy a moment or two longer the beauty and stillness.

I was about to follow when I happened to espy in a corner just a little to the side of the altar quite a small door. It stood slightly ajar, and wondering to what a door in that place could lead, I went to it and saw at once that it opened into a small closet about four feet square or less. It was perfectly empty with a high ceiling, and bare blank walls.

What caused me to step into so uninteresting a place I do not know, but I did so, and instantly, owing probably to my weight on the sill, the door closed with a sharp click, leaving me in perfect darkness.

At the same moment I heard the retreating steps and voices of the party with whom I had entered, the swinging to of the outer door and the slide of the heavy bolt into place. If I had been seen I had been forgotten.

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I tried to open the door, but all my efforts failed. It was locked and I was a prisoner. My loud knocks and calls failed to bring any one to my rescue.

There I was, locked up in a lonely old church, for how long I could not tell. I was filled with alarm, but soon had reassuring thoughts. Surely the old padro would come at night fall to attend to the candles ; or if not then, in the early morning. At most my imprisonment could not be over twelve or fourteen hours, and having lunched well about one o'clock, and it now being about four, the situation was not alarming if it was trying.

Resigning myself as well as possible to the disagreeable, to pass the time, I proceeded to examine my narrow apartment, by passing my hands carefully over the walls. I hoped to find a spring or something by which the door could be opened, and thus give me the freedom of the church, and relief from this overpowering darkness.

I found on reaching up I could just touch the ceiling with my finger tips. This surprised me, as I had an impression, as I looked into the closet, of a ceiling much higher than it now proved to be, and was still more astonished upon farther examination, to find that its surface did not touch the walls, but that there was a space of about two inches all around, as if the ceiling were suspended from above.

This was stranger than my mistake about its height, and I began to feel somewhat uncomfortable. Seating myself on the floor I tried to solve the mystery of so curious a construction, but could not think of anything I had ever seen or heard like it.

After reflecting some time, and being unable to determine upon an explanation I stood up to examine the ceiling more carefully and found to my bewilderment that I could easily touch it without fully straightening my arm. Could I be mistaken, or was I the victim of some strange hallucination?

Exceedingly puzzled, I sat down and tried to collect my wavering senses. After a time I again stood up, and found that my head just touched the ceiling. Surely I was demented, or in a delirium; but after again seating myself for a while and rising a third time to find that I could now not quite stand upright, I realized the horrible fact that the ceiling was gradually sinking.

Even now I tried to persuade myself that I was dreaming, or that the darkness, anxiety and uncertainty had unsettled my mind, and made me imagine strange and unreal things. Summoning all my strength, to steady and control my mind, I rose once more to my feet, determined that this trial would settle the question finally. *I was bent nearly double.*

My knees refused to support me, and falling to the floor, I realized it was no delusion, but that the ceiling was slowly, noiselessly, stealthily descending upon me. Would it stop before it reached the floor, or would it come down, down, until it crushed me to atoms on the stones under my feet? My brain and limbs became numb with horror.

The cell was not sufficiently large for me to lie flat on the floor, so I sat down with my back to the wall. Occasionally when my courage and strength permitted, I would raise my hand, to find each time that the space above me had become less.

All this time I listened eagerly for the footsteps of the old padro, but no sound of human presence reached me. Deathly stillness everywhere. All I could do was to wait, and meet bravely the awful death that I knew was close at hand.

Slowly the monster above me descended, until I felt it touch my head, and then sitting upright being no longer possible, I bent over until my forehead rested on my knees. In this painful position I awaited my death. Cold sweat poured from face and hands. I could not move so much as a finger, I felt the electric currents of intense fear stir and stiffen my hair, while I crouched lower and lower, waiting for the awful moment when the thing above me should crush me into eternity.

My blood was like ice in my veins, my head seemed bursting with fierce throbs of pain, while every nerve, muscle and fibre in my body tingled with an agony too horrible to describe.

At last I felt it — the fatal touch on my back — one last moment of awful torture and then unconsciousness.

I came to myself by hearing a peculiar grinding sound all around me, and gradually remembered all, at the same time realizing that the horror above me was lifted sufficiently for me to move. I raised my hand, and to my joy found space over head.

I staggered to my feet, expecting to encounter the ceiling again

but no, I could stand upright, and on stretching up my hand found it gone entirely out of reach.

At this moment I heard voices mingled with that queer grinding and creaking, and called as loudly as my weakness would allow. Willing hands soon came to my release.

Where had I been? At the bottom of the shaft, down which ran the ponderous weights of the old clock in the steeple.

The padro and his assistants had come at daybreak to wind up the clock.

Margaret Kelly's Wake.*

BY S. C. BREAN.— (C. E. BARNS.)

[Although this story appeared in THE BLACK CAT eight years ago there is still a steady demand for it. It is therefore reproduced in the belief that every one who has read it will be glad to read it again. For an equally good story of adventure, mystery, humor and pathos, THE BLACK CAT will pay $500.]

THE white-capped nurse bent over the railing between the two tall globes. "Margaret Kelly, Ward 29, is dead," she said, softly. Before the official in blue she laid the usual slip, and then glided away like a phantom.

Acting Superintendent Rickard glanced up at the clock high on the whitewashed wall at his left. It lacked twelve minutes of midnight. Mechanically he drew from a drawer some black-bordered blanks and turned to the ledger.

It was a plain ambulance case. The woman had been picked up unconscious in a West-Side alley three nights before. She was, apparently, one of that vast sweep of human driftwood which ebbs and flows through a great metropolis, leaving no trace. "Tim," he called out to the sleepy attendant bunched up in the corner. "Go down into the property-room and see if among the effects of Margaret Kelly, Ward 29, there is anything by which we can identify her."

"Right, sor," yawned the Dublinite, shuffling along the tiling and down into the lower quarters of Bellevue's mazes.

Tim soon returned. Quite triumphantly he laid before his principal three letters, a bank's certificate of deposit for no mean sum, and two receipted bills — all bearing the name, "Margaret Kelly, West Thirty-third Street." The official glanced them over, making copious notes. It was not often that he so misjudged a common ambulance case. Out of the aggregation the superintendent secured five city addresses.

By the first morning's mail five friends and relatives of the late Margaret Kelly received the shocking tidings of her untimely de-

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mise, and each apprised five and twenty more. By ten o'clock there were gathered together in those three quaint rooms in the very heart of "Hell's Kitchen" where Margaret Kelly, spinster, had lived her narrow and solitary life, no less than forty persons more or less near and dear to the deceased, falling upon one another's necks, sobbing — but with one eye open to prospective loot and the other vigilantly fastened upon the co-heirs.

For, be it known, "M's Kelly" had long been recognized as the richest woman in that whole thickly tenemented block, as well as the most locally famous character. She was the only one out of ten children who had never married. They often affirmed that there was a romance in the case concerning a gallant young countryman, who, after a strange misunderstanding, had fled to Australia.

Certain it was that years ago Margaret had renounced the roseate sphere of matrimony for the fatter-pursed one of parsimony. With an amazing faculty for making money and a still more remarkable talent for saving it, she became the envy of her poverty-burdened sisters and the idol of multitudinous nephews and nieces, who more than once fell to warring over her favors. Moreover, Margaret was of a muscular mould which had won for her the sobriquet "the Amazon of Hell's Kitchen," with a tongue that wielded a lash of blue flame in righteous wrath, and a fighting valor in local inter-tenement warfare that made her highly respected, to say the least.

And yet, with all her disillusions of the heart, with all privation and trained avarice, Margaret was blessed with a big Irish heart upon which all her blood relatives pulled a close string. Many is the kinsman saved from actual dispossession, shipped back to the dear old Emerald Isle to die, or whose children were married or buried at Margaret's expense — even though these bounties narrowed her down to a bread-and-tea diet for weeks to right her conscience and recoup her purse.

How glowingly now were recounted these manifold good deeds! What tender reminiscences and grateful benedictions! Yet how deeper than all was the impatience of the heirs to discover the exact extent of those mysterious possessions before which Death had at last lifted the veil! Hours of delicious sorrow and melting

eulogy concealed a killing impatience to get down to business. It was "Longshoreman Mike," the eldest of the nearest of kin, who took upon himself the office of chief of that clan of bandit mourners — bandits first and mourners afterward. Upon him devolved the task of breaking into chests, hampers and bureau-drawers, bringing forth secret treasures of silk, Irish lace, whitest linen and gowns that never saw the light save on St. Patrick's Day or at a wedding, passing these back to the weeping ones who properly gushed afresh over each discovery, apportioning them among themselves with self-righteous justice.

When five bankbooks were found in a bunch, there was the hush of the sepulchre till the exact aggregation was known; but when from the remote depths of a sheet-iron chest there was brought a black woolen stocking so suspiciously heavy that the treasure-trover himself widened his eyes as he came forth to empty its contents upon the oilcloth table, there was excitement indeed. A stream of gold in the coin of many realms, to the count of twelve hundred dollars, lay before them. Every heart was fired with amazement as well as cupidity, the embarrassment being relieved by Longshoreman Mike, who spoke with veritable inspiration:

"God's blessin' on the dear soul;" he sobbed, tossing the stocking into the coal-box. "Our dear Margaret must have the foinest funeral and the most glorious wake iver known in the Ward!"

"Roight and proper!" chimed in a chorus, while tears — not all of grief — coursed many a grimy furrow. Then Mike, the recognized head, was appointed to take care of "the yaller," to give the orders and pay the price. "But moind now!" cautioned one, "a shtrict accounting to us all. We're all of one blood, saints save us! but business is business, even bechune rilatives!" With one hand on his heart and eyes uplifted to the vision of the winged Margaret, Mike took the superfluous pledge. Then he proceeded to affairs of state.

It required the remainder of the day. The orders prepaid to undertaker, caterer, florist and corner liquor dealer were such as to give "Hell's Kitchen" shortness of breath. It even put to shame the New Year's feasts of the Ward Heelers' Club, already locally classic. On the following morning, then, all arrayed in their finest, the forty mourners left the tradesmen in the three

little rooms to complete their tasks, and, with hearse in state, started, nine carriages strong, toward Bellevue.

There the first shudder awaited them. They were informed that the body of their dear Margaret had been conveyed to the morgue — that sombre pile on the edge of East River. Thither they repaired, with many groanings.

The interior of that structure resembles a safety-deposit vault under a clear dome. A hundred small steel doors close upon the row on row of separate graves of unknown and pauper dead. Morgue-Keeper Fane met the solemn concourse in the tiled corridor. He learned their mission and then led them, all shuddering and huddled with horror, through the great gates and down half-way along the bleak rows, halting before a door whereon was seen a card slipped behind a tiny pane, the name of the occupant pen-printed upon it.

The mourners shrivelled nearer, jamming their kerchiefs into their mouths, breathless in silence. The door swung wide. Seizing the sliding litter, the morgue-keeper drew it half-way out, disclosing the upper half of its lifeless burden, and stood gazing into the semicircle of expressionless faces about him.

There was no chorus of wails, no fainting, no tearing of hair. Instead, it was Mike who broke the appalling spell with a gulp of protest. "Look 'ere — m' Gawd!" he choked. "Thot ain't Margaret Kelly, you blunderin' idjit —"

"Isn't it, though?" rebuked the custodian, re-examining the card.

"Naw!" came back the rebuff, with the reinforcement of clenched fists shaken menacingly, for Mike had sampled the stock of the wake quite to the fighting point. "Thot ain't our Margaret. Why, sor, if anny livin' man were to tell the corpse of the rale Margaret Kelly that she looked the loikes o' that, she'd rise up off that slab and break his face, so she would. Our Margaret Kelly, sir, was six foot one, and ivery inch a leddy!"

A volley of reinforcing protest supplemented this family columbiad delivered with such proud gusto. The morgue-keeper pushed back the litter, closed the door and fled to the telephone in his private office. "Superintendent," he said, calling up Bellevue, "the friends of the late Margaret Kelly, whose body was brought down

here last night, fail to identify. There is a mistake somewhere."

"Hold the wire," came the anxious answer.

Down into the property-room the superintendent hastened on a tour of investigation. He returned a few minutes later, his face blazing. "Tim," he growled out to the sleepy attendant in the corner, "you are discharged!" Then over the 'phone again, "It was all the fault of my blundering help here," he said. "He gave me the wrong documents out of the property-room. You see, there were *two* Margaret Kellys: One an unknown, Ward 29; the other, Margaret Kelly, of West Thirty-third Street, Ward 31. You've got the unknown down there. The other was just discharged fifteen minutes ago, alive and well. Break the good news to the mourners, with apologies, et cetera. Good-bye."

Joyously the morgue-keeper conveyed the glad tidings to the assembled forty. They stood still in mute amazement, with dry eyes and limp jaws, literally frozen to the stone tiling. "Good Gawd, mon! Y' don't really mane to tell me that Margaret Kelly's aloive — "

"Precisely, sir."

"Howly Mither!" And Mike felt his soul ooze out of his shoes. To face Margaret Kelly dead were disagreeable enough, but to face her alive now — the very thought drove him into the corner, where he took six fingers of liquid reinforcement at a gulp and tossed the flask through the rear door into the river. As there were murmurs of a lynching, Morgue-Keeper Fane retreated into the autopsy room.

Meanwhile a most impressive personage alighted from a Seventh Avenue car at the Thirty-third Street corner and started westward. As she turned into her familiar doorway, a bevy of little children uttered a combined shriek and ran pell-mell into hiding. In the gloom of the first landing she greeted an old friend, who immediately threw up her hands and fell in a dead faint. By the time she had reached her own apartments on the third floor, the newcomer was in a mood for any surprises.

She found plenty of them. The caterer was uncovering a big frosted cake, the florist was banking the mantel with white roses and the liquor dealer was setting up a miniature gin-mill in the corner cupboard. At the threshold the intruder paused, her face

blank as a bluestone image, her shoulders thrown back and knuckles dug deep into her ribs. Finally she found voice:

"Oh ho, now!" she droned. "An' what's all this? A weddin'?"

The man in the white apron gave her a glance of contempt over his rampart of bottles. "Weddin' nothing," he snarled. "Can't yer see it's a funer'l?"

The woman's keen eyes blinked. A hideous smile played over the bloodless lips. "Railly now — a funer'l! I niver would have known it." Then with bitter sarcasm, "Do y' moind tellin' me whose funeral it is?"

"Why, poor old Margaret Kelly's funeral, o' course."

The newcomer strained up on her very tiptoes with gathering scorn, the unkempt feathers upon her grizzled head brushing the door-frame above. "The divvil it is!" she groaned, taking a forward step and clenching her big red fists. "An' do y' moind tellin' me who's goin' to pay for Margaret Kelly's funeral?"

The man in the apron gave a shrug. "Oh don't *you* worry," he said. "It's all paid for."

The frame of a giantess swelled like a thundercloud. "With whose money, you young blackguard — with whose money?"

The man pointed to the rifled iron chest in the corner. "To be sure, with Margaret Kelly's money — whose else?"

He might have said more, but the Nemesis of "Hell's Kitchen" was upon him in an instant, and riot began. There were wailings and tearing of hair, the women supplying the wailings, the men the hair. "Out with y', dogs, brutes, varmin, brigands!" she screamed, making terrific onslaught upon both tradesmen and their wares, seizing a floral piece bearing the words "Gone Home" in red carnations on a field of white roses, and smashing it upon the florist's head. "'Gone Home,' is it? she cried, "Y' mean 'Come Home,' y' pirates — yes, come home just in time to save a rag or two to me back and the price of a loaf. Out wid y', haythen, vipers, robbers! Out wid y', or I'll murder y' all in cold blood, by the saints, so I will. Och, mither, mither! Am I alive or am I dead?" And as there seemed to be no doubt about it in the minds of the vanquished, the tradesmen fled in confusion, dodging bottles of the peaty old Irish which narrowly missed them

and crashed against the stair wall, leaving great stains. Then into the armchair the Amazon flopped in a state of semi-hysterics amid the wreckage, while on emerging from the lower door the tradesmen ran into the melancholy procession on the way from Bellevue and the morgue. "Go, call the police!" cried one. "There is a mad woman upstairs pounding the place to atoms."

"Better the place than me," responded the mourner chief with a sigh, proceeding still slower. It was a sorrowful band that had started out an hour before; but for blue devils of despair it was nothing compared with the return journey, which resembled a march of martyrs to the gibbet.

By the time the last landing was reached, the forty were reduced to just six, and they the heaviest weights of the crowd. Guardedly they peeped around corners and through the door-chinks, confronting at last that portraiture of wasted rage and woe pinioned down by utter collapse in the midst of her ravage. Then, with haggard eyes and hanging jaws, in fawning suppliance they advanced, pouring out their inmost souls:

"Glory be to hiven, Margaret Kelly!" cried Mike, "sure it was all a mistake. It weren't you at all, at all; but some other miserable outcast craythur wid your own name, Margaret Kelly, that were lyin' stiff in the margue, while you, the saints be praised! are home here wid us, aloive and well, and we ag'in the happiest mortals on earth — "

The swollen eyes widened, and a sinister gleam broke from their depths. "Y' look it!" shot back the shaft of irony, "y' look it — Divvil take the whole boonch!" Then, in the bitter silence, "So y' t'ought there was goin' to be a funeral and a wake did y'? Well, if you had come ten minutes sooner, there would have been — several."

One after another the mourners crept back and began restoring the lace, silk, shawls, gowns and all as to a shrine. It was a pitiful rite, performed in silence; for, as nothing could possibly be said in mitigation of their unknowing offence, they said nothing.

It was only Mike who had the courage of his vindication now: "Y' must not blame us, Margaret," he groaned. Great globules of sweat gathered in the wrinkles as he drew forth the summons from the hospital. "Look at this black-bordered liar, Margaret,

look at it! Ah, Margaret, it is yourself that has a pretty case against the city for funeral expinses over a live corpse, and heavy damages for wounded affections — "

"Shut up wid your politics!" yelped the convalescent, "and give me a small dhrop of whushky, or I'll have a raylapse, and then you'll have me where you want me — tin feet under sod."

There was a skurrying to do her bidding. Margaret drank deep. Rallying, she looked abroad over the wreckage of her madness. Then a new terror came into her soul. "Moike, Moike!" she groaned, "tell me now, on your honor before God, what have y' done wid that shtockin'?"

The big longshoreman staggered back. A sudden sickness took the courage out of his heart. He set his teeth and threw out his arms like a gorilla at bay. "Margaret Kelly," he moaned, "there's no use lyin' to y', an' by the saints, I won't. The shtockin' — well, here goes! The shtockin' is gone!"

The convalescent rose, but fell back again. "Gone — gone?" she cried in a voice that brought terror to every listener.

"At least, more than half of it, Margaret. There were twelve hundred dollars in the black rag — "

"Nothing more?"

"May God judge me!" was the answer, as the longshoreman thrust up his clenched hands till they almost struck the ceiling, as if his honor had been impeached. "We counted it there on the table, all of us; and then I threw the shtockin' into the coal-box."

The convalescent covered her face with her hands. "Now you have killed me," she moaned. "Merciful saints! What have I done to bring down upon me such afflictions?"

The accused took a stride forward. "Margaret, say whativer you will, I swear there was not one penny more than — "

"Divvil take the money!" screamed the convalescent, striking her forehead. "Did I say annything about money, man?"

"But, Margaret — er — "

"I didn't mean money. I meant — something else — " The swaying figure bowed in an attitude of silent grief.

The longshoreman glanced into the astonished faces, then swept his hand over his forehead with a significant sign. Had poor Margaret lost her mind? He pressed closer. "For the

love of hiven, Margaret," he pursued, "what do you mane? What was in that black shtockin' — "

"Something worth more than life to me," she answered calmer now, although it was the calm of despair. "And now it's gone and me poor heart is broke, me poor heart is broke."

The clustering group stood dumb. What beside the gold did the old black stocking contain; Visions of diamonds, pearls and other precious treasures swept before them, supplementing the recollections of the bankbooks and securities. Only "Longshoreman Mike" seemed to possess presence of mind now. He backed over to the coal-box and began digging with his great chimpanzee-like claws among the coals. Suddenly his square-jowled visage uplifted triumphantly. In his clutch he dragged the black length to view like a python from its lair. "Here it is, Margaret," he cried, "just as I threw it aside." He came forward and threw the rag into the convalescent's lap.

A sudden change came over the whole attitude. A new strength came into Margaret Kelly, a new illumination, a sort of spiritual revelation enveloping her. Into the dark depths she thrust her hand. Before the amazed eyes of the onlookers, who thought the receptacle empty, Margaret drew forth a faded letter and a small photograph, which was more than half obliterated with kisses. One grateful look, and the woman fell forward upon her knees, pouring out her heart in thankful prayer, burying her face in the simple tokens.

The assembled kith and kin gazed upon this drama of a solitary life as if it were quite beyond their solving. No one ventured a word, yet every one knew that for the first time in all their lives they had turned the one forbidden page in the lonely spinster's history of long watching and sustaining hope.

"Oh, Moike!" cried the woman, regaining her seat and thrusting the tender tokens into her bosom. "It's all turnin' out right, and I'm a sorry wretch not to be thankful for many blissin's, so I am. Did you say that it were a poor outcast who were mistaken for me down there in the dead house? Then go back with the hearse and shroud and all, for which, please God, I'll have no use for many a year, and bring the poor haythin craythur here, where we'll give her a dacint burial as one of our very own.

Aye, don't stand starin' at me loike that, fer I'm not gone daft. I mane it all, ivery word. I don't care what may be her pasht or prisent. No one that bears the name of Margaret Kelly shall go to the Potther's Field while I live to chate the grave-digger."

The longshoreman stood aghast. "Do you really mane it, Margaret?" he queried, with surprise lighting up that look of compassion.

"From the botthom of me heart, I do," was the firm rejoinder. "Go bring the poor wretch from that accursed place; for, bad as 'Hell's Kitchen' may be, the margue, God save us from it! is worse. Bring her here in the little black house I thank hiven I have no use for, even if I do own it; and we'll give the stranger such a funeral as was niver known in the Ward, so we will —"

"An' his honor, the Mayor, shall pay the freight, eh?"

"Right and truly. Call the praist too, and do it all up in the dacentest style of the art, jus' as if it were for me. But first, jus' another wee dhrop and all join in, to swear that we're glad we're livin,' nor jilious of the dead for all the good said of 'em."

The guests drew near, clapping their hands with joy — they who were but an hour gone wielding their cambrics. "Margaret, you're a trump and no mistake!" cried Mike, striking his chest.

"Long live Aunt Margaret! It's we who are proud of you, b' hivens!" chimed in the chorus. Then, amid much fluttering and sputtering, the pledge of family fealty was passed from heart to heart — such a pledge as was never known in all that humble region before. Soon after Longshoreman Mike drove away with the undertaker, while all hands fell to putting things to rights again after the ravage, pondering meanwhile not more upon the miracle of that good soul's home-coming than upon the romance about which she had so long remained silent.

Late in the evening of that eventful day the assembled forty, now generously reinforced by as many more, for the tidings of the hour had travelled fast and far, sat semicircled about the hostess, arrayed in her smartest gown. They were willing tarryers, for the bounty was of excellent variety and abundance — "the thrate of his Honor the Mayor," as Margaret grandiloquently termed it, — offering that dignitary at least one toast in four, reserving the rest for herself.

But when the undertaker's attendants entered the populous tenement, and above the measured tread of the bearers of the heavy burden could hear the longshoreman's "Stiddy, now! Thrate her like one of us. Careful around the turn now, do y' moind!" a shudder ran through the assemblage, for every one realized the presence of the dead in truth.

With many puffings and grunts that sounded above the awful hush, the "little black house," now occupied by an unexpected tenant, was deposited in the further room from the crowded chamber where feasting and good cheer were so suddenly quelled by the tragedy of life.

"Only to think of it!" Margaret kept echoing over and over. "Here I am, aloive and well, wid all me good frinds about me, and there, alone, unknown, frindless, widout even a mourner —"

"Come, dry up, Margaret, for the love o' hiven!" put in Mike, entering the room and facing the pallid faces, "and be glad thot it ain't yourself. Ah, but she has a smile on her face, that poor sufferin' nobody, as if she knew that now, even if none cared for her livin', we all are doin' our best for her dead. Come in, folks. Come in and take a look of the poor outcast, for, damme, she has the look of havin' been onct a rale leddy. Come in —"

"Nivver!" A voice broke out of the chorus of shudders.

"But *I* will!" It was Margaret who leaped up courageously, as if to challenge them all. "I am not afraid of the woman who bears me name, dead or aloive. Lead on, Mike."

Mike led, and the company, all a-tremble, snailed a long way after them. Suddenly a strange low cry came from the far chamber. It nearly froze the hearts of the listeners, for they realized that it was Margaret's. Instantly she came plunging back, her face expressive of emotion almost tragic, and flung herself into the chair again, seizing the glass which rattled against her teeth as she drank with a choking sound. "It is Margaret Kelly — it is, it is!" she moaned. "Ah, my God! will miracles never cease?"

The company pressed about her with eyes darting flames of terror. It was Mike who first found voice, as usual. "Margaret Kelly," he said almost sternly, "have you gone stark mad?"

The woman did not seem to hear. She drew with trembling

fingers the little tokens which she had deposited in her bosom after rescuing them from the black stocking. "Poor child!" she droned. "It is the way with disappointed love: it drives some to the savings bank, some to the gutthers. It drove this Margaret to the bank, that Margaret to the margue."

No one offered any elucidation of this enigma, so the woman continued: "Sit down, me frinds, for I have a long shtory to tell ye — aye, and a true one. Oh, you will never regret. Do y' see this picture — these letthers — this lock o' hair? Listen!"

The company sank back into their seats in the tense silence. "It is the unspoken history of a good woman's first and last love affair, if I do say so mesilf, and you will belave it, ivery word." She made a gesture to close the door of the middle room, beyond which were gathered a few of the curious whom the mysterious power of death draws rather than repels.

"It is jus' tin years ago, comin' Saint Pathrick's Day, thot I first met Danny McFee, at the ball of the 'Ancient Order of Hibernians.' An' whin I say thot he was as foine a young gintleman as iver breathed the breath of hiven and made love to an honest girl, I mane it on me heart, whativer has since come bechune to part us. Nor was I the only one to fall in love wid him thot night — but no matther. Danny was the ideel of the thrue man, a soldier in form and manners, tinder with the fair, wid some money and plinty of promise as a risin' lawyer in the full of the political shwim.

"Well, I moight as well confess, unbeknownst to anny of ye, Danny and I mit of a Sunday afternoon at ould Aunt Bridget's in Harlem for a stroll in the park to make our plans and build castles on hope, for we had everything to make the heart of the lover glad. During the wake we wrote daily letthers; and for fear some one might discover it, I took a private letther-box around the corner on the avenue where a Frinch Jew kept a cigar and news store. For many months I recaved the daily confession of the brave man's love, such as I treasure to this day. But suddenly, though I was faithful in ivery word and thought to me Danny, I got no replies to me letthers, though he swore that he had regularly done his duty. This was the cause of the first coolness. But one day I found a letther in the box — and such a

letther it was! It called me ivery swate name in the catalogue, makin' appointments and endin' with untold millions of kisses. It was signed 'Tom Farrell,' but such a name I niver knew. Well, I t'rew the letther away; but the nixt day, instead of one from me Danny, there was another from 'Tom Farrell.' And on the day followin' another, so that by Sunday I had foive. With much misery then I called at Aunt Bridget's, resolved to lay the whole mysterious matther before Danny, for I was beside mesilf wid worryin.'

"But, alas, alone wid Danny I lost heart. I saw from his coolness that he thought me lyin' when I said I had not recaved his letthers; and I — well, I thought him playin' the fool wid me. I saw trouble brewin', but did not think it would come so soon. But to me shame the next mornin' I found the package of strange letthers missin' from me pocket, and then came a messenger from Danny wid a cruel note. 'It's all over, Margaret,' says he. 'That pack of letthers explains everythin'. I found thim on Aunt Bridget's flure, where you dropped thim. My God! why did you not tell me, like an honest girl,' says he, 'that you loved this man more than me? But that's the end. I am writin' this on board of the *Juliet,* bound for Austhralia,' says he, 'so good-bye! Be happy wid your "Tom Farrell," whoever he is,' says he, 'but truer to him than to me, or you will rue it. Good-bye, foriver, Margaret, though you are the only woman I iver loved or iver will love, so help me God,' says he," and the narrator bent down, her lank frame riven with sobs.

"Well, me frinds, this shock well nigh brought me to me bed, so it did, but the next day I recaved another, which did it completely. Wid all me poor soul burnt out wid rage at the injustice, ashamed and sick at heart, I wint around the corner to give up the kay to the accursed letther-box. Opening it for the last time, there, to me horror, I found another wan of thim 'Tom Farrell' letthers, and a damon's fury came into me heart. I had torn the thing in twain whin, looking up, I saw a pale little woman enter, advance straight up to me letther-box and stand stock dumb. Thin, as she turned and saw the rent sheet in my hand, she flew at me like a tigress. 'Give me that letther!' she screamed, clawin' my face to shreds. 'Who are you? Is it you who have

been sthalin' me letthers for the past week?' she yowled, her face purple wid righteous anger.

"'No,' says I, calmly, 'it's you who have been sthalin' mine.'

"'Tis a lie in your t'roat!' says she. An' I now d'clare to God that your thavin' of me letthers has lost me the besht mon in the worruld —'

"'Wrong again,' says I. 'You may have lost the next besht; but it's I who have lost the besht, t'rough your thavin' of me letthers.'

"'I'll have you arristed!' says she.

"'I'll have you hanged!' says I.

"'What's your name?' says she.

"'Margaret Kelly,' says I.

"'Wha-a-at!' says she.

"'Before the livin' God!' says I.

"The little woman covered her face wid her hands. 'An' so is mine,' she moaned. And we two Margaret Kellys stood starin'.

"'Thin, if this letter is yours,' says I, 'others that I have are yours too.'

"'An' I can return the complimint,' says she. 'For here is a boonch of love letthers from a mon I niver heard of.' An' she passed over to me the precious boondle of poor Danny's declaration of undyin' affiction. Thin we jumped into that blundherin' sheeny, the both o' us, for he had given us both the same box, thinkin' we were one and the same, and aiche av us lost a good mon in consequince. An' whin we got t'rough wid the blundherin' postmaster, he weren't fit for a doormat to a mud cabin.

"But, proud born as I was, I took me poison like a leddy. Divvil a bit did I explain to Danny, even had I known his whereabouts. I jus' bookled down to makin' money and savin' it; while she, poor craythur, fell away to a shadow after thot, for I met her once or twict, and losin' her hold on life, she wint to the wrong. Ye know, disappointed affiction works different ways on different peoples — the makin' of some, the breakin' of others; an' though I still love Danny McFee wid all me poor heart, divvil a step would I take to repair his injustice or —"

Margaret had risen and stood quivering, with her clenched hands thrown wide; but her mood of vindication was interrupted by the

sudden presence of one of the guests from the still chamber beyond. His face wore a peculiar expression as he said, "There's a man at the other door. Has a boondle of flowers. Says he knows the poor dead woman and wants to pay his last respicts —"

"Let him in!" cried Margaret. "By hivens! it's the mysterious 'Tom Farrell' so it is. Let him in. Ah, now that I have seen the little woman who robbed me of my happiness widout knowin', I think I'd loike to set eyes on the man who, from the same cause, robbed us both." She started to follow her leader, the company fired with a strange sense of curiosity.

By the time they reached the threshold of the darkened room, however, they all paused, for the stranger had entered, laid a mass of white roses upon the casket, and was kneeling beside it with his cheek against the lid, his face hidden in his encircling arms. This pitiful rite brought a hush like that of the sepulchre itself; and when at last the mourner lifted his bearded countenance and straightened, tall and almost spectral in the semi-darkness, he gazed upon the astonished faces that gleamed white and phantasmal against the deep shadows.

"Thank you, my good people," were his first words after recovering from his embarrassment. "I know that I have no right to be here, but I could not resist, for I once knew this good woman well — aye, loved her and love her memory now."

The plaintive quiver thickened many a throat with compassion, and more than one advanced as if to offer the stranger comfort.

"Yes, good friends, I loved her, and she was once my promised wife. But there came a misunderstanding between us, and fool that I was, instead of solving the mystery which was the cause of it, I laid all the blame on the innocent, and we parted, never to meet again till now with the Great Shadow between. You who are young, listen and take warning. If ever you love and are bound to another with all your heart and mind, and there comes a cloud between, do not part so. Wave the cloud away, then part if you must. That is all. I thank you more than I can say, kind friends, for this precious moment, and I shall carry the memory of it to my dying hour. And now, before I go, may I have just one last look at the departed? Do I ask too much?"

It was Longshoreman Mike who came forward, his cheeks

glistening with tears. "Stranger," he faltered, "it's you that can't ask anythin' here that you can't have to your heart's contint, God savin' you, sor!" Reverently he removed the lid from over the still face, motioning for the light.

The stranger bowed low and with that stony calm which is expressive of deepest emotion in a strong man. For some few tickings of the old clock he gazed upon the marble features, then leaped back with a strange exclamation. "But that — that is not Margaret Kelly," he cried. "I — I must have been misinformed." He tore at his neckband as if choking. "That is not Margaret Kelly — *my* Margaret — "

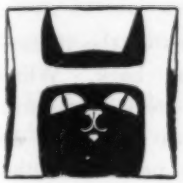
"Nor ours ayther," groaned Mike. Then, dropping the lid, he rushed upon the stranger, who recoiled from him. "F' the love o' Gawd, man, who are you?" he panted. "Are you not the mysterious 'Tom Farrell?'"

The sound of that name was like a blow that brings blood. "I — 'Tom Farrell?'" groaned the stranger. "No, no, God forbid! That's the man whose unknowing wrong it was that partèd my love and me. My name is Daniel McFee!"

A wild voice pierced the gloom. Out of the shadows there came a woman's figure, swift as a whirlwind. "Danny, Danny, Danny!" she called out, in the agony and the joy of her heart, and flung herself bodily into the stranger's arms. It was the original Margaret Kelly.

The Watcher of the Dam.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.



AMRAH DHAS, the Guardian of the Waters, crouched on the stone coping of the Chutalana Dam that lay above the village of Lagrore, and spoke softly to the waters that gurgled against the embankment. Hamrah Dhas conversed frequently with the waters. Every wavelet that rolled across the great dam carried a question that flayed his soul.

Now and again he raised his voice reprovingly. Big waves, crumpled up by the breeze that came down from the Sikkan Pass, sprawled over the edge of the coping and wet the great granite slabs upon which he sat. The Guardian hurriedly pulled his bare feet away and wedged a prayer for his eternal salvation into the excuses he was muttering. The big waves terrified Hamrah Dhas. They appeared to protest haughtily against the excuses that he poured forth in a hollow monotone.

"Be patient, little waters," he cried, excitedly. "The time has not come for you to be unloosed, wherefore I do not lift my hand. Do not be angry with me; the fault is not mine. I am Hamrah Dhas, thy humble servant, and I wait and watch."

But the murmuring of the Guardian had little effect upon the waters. The light breeze from the Pass was strengthened by an army of aggressive little puffs that came panting from the snow-capped Himalayas, and the wavelets leapt angrily at the stone coping. The Hindu tucked his legs away from their foamy lips and cried his entreaties into the gathering gloom.

"Yes, yes, I know I am to blame," he shrieked, "but I was only one among the ten thousand who chained you. It is true I helped Onslow Sahib to fence you round with the big stones that the mule teams carried from the quarries of Jeddelpore,

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but my share in the whole work is like to the flame of a candle beside the noonday sun. Be patient, little waters, the time has not come."

He listened for a few minutes to the sound of the choppy waters and spoke again as if in answer to a charge he heard in their wild gurgling.

"Yes, it is true, but I was as clay in the hands of the potter, and the whip of the serang was heavy on my back. What could I do, little waters? Onslow Sahib was a stern man, and the great drunken Trevellyan would not listen to excuses. It is true they are now dead, but they put their names on the brass plate above the floodgates, and I can do nothing. What did Onslow Sahib say when the dam was finished? 'Hearken to this, you black devils,' he said. 'I have put my name and the name of my chief on this plate above the waters, and while our names remain there the dam will last.' Little waters, be merciful! How can I unloose you while their names remain on the plate? But I, Hamrah Dhas, will remain till the gods will it that the plate shall fall, and then I will set you free."

The night crept down from the Poorana Hills. The big dam lay weird and gloomy in the twilight. Little waves, whipped forward by the breeze, rushed out of the blackness like white accusing fingers, and Hamrah Dhas moaned fearfully. He wriggled along the arched coping like a crippled serpent, and groaned in agony under the reprimands he heard in the gurgling of the waters.

Hamrah Dhas had been guardian of the Chutalana Dam for twenty years. Trevellyan, C. B., who planned the work, had recommended him for the position when the water of the Peewana had been turned into the basin, and the keeper had listened to the waves night and day. At first they murmured drowsily, faintly protesting against their imprisonment, but as the years wore on, they shrieked angrily to Hamrah Dhas when the wind from the Sikkan Pass harried the wavelets that could not escape from their assaults. In the dark nights their wild reproaches dragged the Guardian from his couch in the dirty dak-bungalow, and in fear and trembling he would answer the charges which his mad brain heard in the noises they made

against the barrier. He lived in a hell of his own making. The waves maddened him. They called him ever to destroy the barricade that kept them prisoner on the hillside. The desire to do so was great within the mind of Hamrah Dhas, but he remembered the oath he had taken to Trevellyan twenty years before, and, furthermore, he was afraid of the inscription on the brass plate embedded in the stone above the floodgates.

Hamrah Dhas was much afraid of the brass plate. Trevellyan had said that the dam would stand while it remained in the stone, and the prophecy impressed the Guardian. He looked at it morning, noon and night, but it showed no sign of leaving its resting place. With his mission schooling he laboriously read the inscription over and over again, and when the waves were very angry he would chant it to them in an effort to quiet their wrath. It was a pompous inscription, but it had little effect on the waters. It even seemed to stir them to greater fury when Hamrah Dhas, in a high monotone, chanted loudly:

This dam was declared open by
His Excellency Lord Frederick Loftus Pincherley,
V. C., K. C. M. G.,
in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of
Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria;
Havelock Harrington Fernley being then
Governor of the Province of Jayeumpore.
The work was begun and carried to completion by
Densmore Eardley Trevellyan, C. B., and
Marcus Allington Onslow, M. C. E.

The Guardian of the Waters imitated the manner of the British tourists who read the inscription with awe and reverence when they inspected the Chutalana Dam, and it was a magnificent elocutionary effort. But the results were nil. The waters had no regard for Lord Frederick Loftus Pincherley or Her Gracious Majesty, and each night the agony of the Guardian increased. He couldn't sleep. The waters shrieked to him! The little waves cried like lost souls as they tried to escape the buffeting of the mountain wind that rushed them round and round their prison! Night after night Hamrah Dhas would crouch upon the wet wall and murmur his excuses to the

white-capped waters that rushed like hissing snakes along the barrier.

"Have I not suffered?" he screamed. "Has not my punishment been great? Did not my child fall upon your bosom by the great tower and come back to me lifeless on the eighth day at the floodgates? Did not my father die in the dak-bungalow when Onslow Sahib gave me the post? Did not my wife fly with the unclean Jhil who came to mend the masonry above the middle tower? Yes; I have suffered for the share I took in chaining you here where the winds of space could ruffle your bosom, but I will watch and wait for the time."

The gusts tore down from the hills like troops of Pathan horsemen, and the dam billowed under the attack. The Guardian bowed his head on the wet stones and wept. His accusing conscience totaled up his labors in the making of the great stone barrier that held the Peewana in check, and he screamed in pain.

"Be merciful, little waters!" he yelled. "I will watch till the plate falls from the stone. Yes, I will watch till the plate falls from —"

He stopped abruptly and leaned forward as if he heard a voice speaking in the darkness above the waters.

"I am listening," he cried. "Speak on."

The waves splashed upon the coping and drenched his thin rags, but he didn't move. Like a sculptured figure he sat with neck outstretched. The mad brain of Hamrah Dhas was receiving instructions.

Presently he stood up and shook the water from his clothes.

"Oh, little waters, it might be done," he gurgled fearfully. Again he stopped to listen.

"Yes, yes, it could be done," he shouted. "I could tear it down!"

In the black darkness he crept along the coping towards the bungalow, his heart throbbing mightily. He had waited twenty years for his instructions, and now they had come out of the gloom that covered the dam. He would tear down the plate and make the prophecy of Trevellyan nought.

The roar of the waves strengthened the arms of Hamrah

Dhas as he swung the heavy mattock and attacked the pillar in which the plate was imbedded. The waves would be free at last. He would see the waters of the Peewana go tumbling down the hillside, and his soul would have peace. With a mighty effort he wrenched the brass from the embrasure and rushed back towards the dirty bungalow.

Down below in the valley the lights of the village of Lagrore twinkled in the darkness. Hamrah Dhas had a sister in Lagrore, and he thought of her for a moment as he carried a parcel down to the passage near the floodgates. She was the wife of a metal-worker living near the temple, and he wondered if he would have time to tell her of the danger when the Peewana burst its bonds. But even as he stood pondering, the waves screamed at his delay, and he hurried madly.

As he carried the packages down into the passageway he thought of his god-given luck. The roadmakers had stored their explosives in a ruined temple near the dam, and Hamrah Dhas would use them to bring peace to the waters and his own soul. Perhaps the voice that had urged him to pull down the plate had also urged the roadmakers to leave the explosives in a place where he could get them.

Hamrah Dhas was joyful. He danced around and clapped his hands as he rammed the tremendous charge into the blind end of the passage. His sufferings were nearly at an end. The sister's fate did not trouble him. What did his sister know of the nights of agony that he passed on the coping waiting to hear the word that would tell him how his soul could obtain rest? What did Lagrore know of his sufferings? What did Trevellyan or the Queen know? Trevellyan had chained him to the post with an oath and left him there to suffer the tortures of hell.

He put the last plug of dynamite in position, put a match to the fuse, and then, grasping the brass plate, he fled up the hillside.

. . . . . .

It was Eastman, Superintendent of the Jeddelpore Police, who found Hamrah Dhas on the evening after Lagrore had been swept into oblivion. The Guardian lay face downwards on the

hill, high above the track of the flood, and Eastman made a hasty examination.

"Snakebite," he murmured, standing up. "Some old snake was disturbed by the roar of the water and thinking the nigger was the cause of it, bit him as they were both scrambling out of the danger zone."

But the plate had more effect on the snake than it had on the waters. When Eastman turned over the brass he found a crushed cobra beneath; for when Hamrah Dhas fell, the heavy metal square bearing the names of Lord Frederick Loftus Pincherley and Her Gracious Majesty had fallen upon the reptile and crushed the life out of it.

The Vacant Seat.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

IT was noted that wherever he sat there always remained a vacant seat beside him on his left. At the play the seat next him on that side was never occupied — at church it was the same. In the cars, when he traveled, or on the water, there always remained that vacant seat on his left.

It would seem that he was accompanied through life by an invisible companion, who remained at his side as faithfully as space itself.

"He is mad!" said many. "He goes nowhere but he purchases an extra seat that he may always have a vacant chair beside him. No sane man would act so."

"No, he is not mad, but he is a coward!" said others. "He fears that an enemy will some day sit beside him on his left and stab him in the heart!"

"He is neither mad nor a coward," whispered two or three. "There is no vacant seat beside him — a murdered man's ghost sits there!"

So men and women reasoned about the riddle, but the man who was haunted by a vacant chair on his left heeded them not.

Sometimes an uninformed stranger, or again a rash acquaintance, would seek to occupy the vacant seat, but the act would be quickly repented. A swift glance and a low-spoken word of caution from the owner of the unoccupied seat had about them a subtle power that stayed the rashest, and the offending party would murmur a hasty apology and withdraw.

Occasionally, but so rarely that those few who had once witnessed the incident were unable to support their statement by a second example, the man would seem to speak softly as to an in-

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visible companion on his left. But he may have been merely musing to himself or have addressed some passing ghost of memory. There was nothing in his manner to show that he thought the vacant seat on his left was ever occupied.

It was at the play that the mystery ended. It was a love-lit, lavender-sweet play of the period of the man's youth. He sat alone in a box on the right, half withdrawn into the shadow of the curtains, while close on his left was the haunting vacant seat.

Suddenly those near him in the orchestra saw him start up with a poignant cry of joy and bend over the empty chair.

"Alice!" he whispered. "I have kept this vacant seat beside me all these long years that it might be ready when you chose to come back to me — *and to-night you have come!*"

His arms closed tenderly around the ghostly vacancy of the empty chair, as a lover's arms about the form of a living woman. A moment he remained thus, then there was a heavy fall, and an usher swiftly drew together the curtains of the box.

The man haunted by a vacant seat was dead!

Chivalry in the Sheep Camp.*

BY ARTHUR CHAPMAN.

HERE has been lots of crazy English come to the West, but fer hullsale absorbin' of the loco I never seen one to match Sir Cyril Putney, who used to own the big 78 outfit on the Powder River range, but who took to herdin' sheep when the cow business become nothin' but a distressed echo.

In the capacity of foreman of the 78, and later as camp tender for the Double-O sheep outfit, I was throwed in a good deal with Sir Cyril, and will say for him that I have never heard of a man who could accept a fall in fortunes more graceful. It didn't seem to bother him none to think that yestiddy he was owner of cattle on a thousand hills, and to-day he was bein' blatted at by sheep with a thousand yells. He shore took his medicine philisophic, and it'd be a hull lot better for the world in gen'ral if they was more Sir Cyril Putneys in the human herd.

As Shakespeare says, one touch of loco makes the hull world kin, and it was Sir Cyril's little offness that made him so even tempered, whether he was bossin' seventy good cow-punchers of his own or herdin' sheep for an outfit of bond-clippin' dudes. Sir Cyril's evidence of crazy-weed lunches took the form of ancestor-worship. He was clean daft on the subject of meedieval hist'ry, and when he was runnin' the 78 ranch he done his best to reform the hull territory of Wyomin' accordin' to Burke's Peerage and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and he succeeded well enough to have about sixty square miles of cow country wonderin' whether it was livin' in the day of Richard the Lion-Hearted or Billy the Kid.

At that time Wyomin' was an infant that didn't have a

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single ancestor in its hull pack outfit. It had cactus and longhorns and Injuns in plenty, but askin' a man if he had any ancestors was the same as throwin' down a six-gun on him. But Sir Cyril had brought a hull gall'ry full of ancestors' portraits along with him. He had the picters hung around the walls of the 78 ranch house till there wasn't space enough left for a gun rack. Furthermore he brung along a shipment of armor — the kind that used to be turned out by the boilermaker to the king in the days before Mr. Colt had thunk out the little toy that makes all men equal. He'd set around admirin' these ancestors and their stove-pattern clothes, and talkin' about their great deeds — the ancestors I mean, not the clothes — till he'd outlast the kyotes that was allus howlin' outside of evenin's.

"Jim," he'd say to me, "them was days when it must have been worth a man's while to live. Look at that biggest coat of mail, there. That was worn by my noble ancestor, Sir Arthur Putney, who was one of the greatest fighters that ever couched a lance."

Then he'd go on tellin' me all the battles this big Sir Arthur was in, and all the time he'd be mixin' our whisky with water outen a bottle that had a nozzle on it jest like a railroad water tank, and purty soon he'd get to spoutin' poetry about the good knights whose swords are rust and whose bones are dust, allus windin' up with that one about Sir Galahad:

> My good blade carves the casques of men,
> My stout lance thrusteth sure;
> My strength is as the strength of ten
> Because my heart is pure.

Only it takes a mighty sober man to say that second line, and when Sir Cyril 'd get to tanglin' his conversational rope on "thrusteth sure," I'd grab my hat and make a more or less direct trail to the bunk house.

When the big bust-up come in the cattle business, owin' to the hard winter of '84 when three-fourths of the cattlemen in the West went to the wall, Sir Cyril was done jest a leetle cleaner 'n any one else, and, after his ranch was gone, he disappeared for several years. I didn't hear a thing about him till I drifted into the sheep game, the cow business never havin' picked up proper, and then, makin' the rounds of the Double-O sheep camps, with

grub for the herders, who does I run into but Sir Cyril, settin' on the rib bone of an antediluvian monster he had dug up and readin' a book on falconry in the Middle Ages. After I had made two or three trips to his camp I finds out that Sir Cyril's old hobby is clingin' to him like a burr to a mustang's tail, though of course he can't humor it as he did in the days of the 78.

"Jim, old chap," he says, pullin' at his long mustache with the same lovin' touch that a sane man uses in fondlin' a stack of poker chips, "the portraits of my ancestors is all gone, as is most of the rare armor — kickin' around some pawn shop in Denver, no doubt — but I'll let you into a leetle secret. Look here." And with that he pulls up the cover of the box under his bunk in the sheep wagon, and shows me two full suits of armor, with all the knightly trappin's and saddles for two hosses.

"It's all there is left of my ancestor's belongin's, old chap," he says sadly, "but nobody will get these away from me, Jim, as long as I live. I put on the armor occasionally. It used to frighten the sheep some, but now they're used to it, and, in fact, I rawther think they look forward to the appearance of the Dolorous Knight — for such I have dubbed myself — at eventide."

It wasn't long before I had fell into the idea of Sir Cyril's little drammer he was playin' lone-handed out there on the range, and I throwed into the game for the sake of lendin' it an aspect of sociability. I was formally dubbed the Knight of the Cheerful Countenance, and we done everything accordin' to meedieval rules. Sir Cyril 'd allus leave one of the suits of armor, and trappin's for a hoss, in some arroyo near his sheep camp, and, when I come with supplies, I'd put on them things, and then, with my hoss clad in flowin' raiment like a equine ghost and me a-clankin' like a tin-shop in a cyclone, I'd gallop up to the edge of the camp and blow three blasts on a trumpet. They wasn't very clear blasts, nor very musical, 'cause the instrument I'm best on is the jew's-harp, but they'd rouse Sir Cyril, who'd hustle over to the sheep wagon and don the armor of the Dolorous Knight. Purty soon he'd come lopin' out to meet me, and we'd set, with our lances at rest, and go through dialogue somethin' like the followin':

"Who blows so loud at the drawbridge of ye Dolorous Knight, Sir Cyril Putney?"

"Who but Sir Jim Slattery, Knight of the Cheerful Countenance, who hath rode many miles and far with sundry packages of breakfast food, coffee, and cigarette makin's."

"Enter and welcome, Sir Jim Slattery, Knight of the Cheerful Countenance, and find refreshment for man and beast. Ho, seneschal, lower the drawbridge!"

There bein' no seneschal and no drawbridge, Sir Cyril rides up to the sheep wagon and opens the door with a great clatter, whereupon I rides up and leaves my supplies and find out how things is goin' with the sheep, and come back to earth and the present age in gen'ral.

Now the high plains country is a dangerous place for any man to let his fancies run wild, pertic'larly if he is much alone. Purty soon I finds myself takin' all this Middle Ages play as serious as Sir Cyril himself. You don't have to have much imagination to dream strange day dreams and git queer kinks in your head in a country where magic is workin' all the time. There's magic in the hot, white sunshine, and in the fluffy clouds that sail acrost the bluest sky in the world, and in them far-off mesas whose red sides wink and blink and glow through the purples that come with afternoon. It wain't so strange that us two sheep men soon got to imaginin' them mesas was battlements filled with armed hosts and enchanted maidens, and that the clouds become giants and dragons, and that our fav'rite line of talk sounded like padded cell lingo. I'll bet the plains country of Spain and the plains country of Wyomin' are filled with the same loco weed, for old Donkey Hotey himself never got any crazier'n us two meerage chasers clear out there a thousand miles from nowhere. When we changed camp I rode my gaily caparisoned saddle hoss and the Dolorous Knight drove the team that pulled the sheep wagon, occasionally whistlin' through his visor at the sheep dogs, who kept the sheep on the move, and callin' ahead for me to look out for maraudin' knights who might have designs on our caravan.

There was more'n a jigger of truth in the warnin's of Sir Cyril, for there was bad blood between some of the big sheep and cattle outfits in them days, and raids on sheep camps was common

occurrences. To be sure the Double-O outfit had been let alone, 'cause we never crossed any cattlemen's dead lines, and we allus stuck to what was ours by right of our bein' first comers. But all the same I never failed to keep clost watch in goin' to and from our sheep camps, and our herders was prepared for trouble.

The thing I had been dreadin' popped one day just after I had got to Sir Cyril's camp. After goin' through the usual preliminaries, such as blowin' the bugle blast and lettin' down the drawbridge, we was settin' in the sheep wagon, clad in full knightly regalia, talkin' about the battle of Agincourt, while our hosses was croppin' buffalo grass clost at hand. All of a sudden we heard the poppin' of guns down where the sheep was feedin', and a bullet comes rippin' through the canvas top of the sheep wagon.

"By Jove, old chap," says Sir Cyril, blinkin' at me through his single-shot eyeglass, "somebody's shootin' our sheep."

"And furthermore them shots through the wagon is notice for us to stay inside," says I.

"But Jim, old chap, we cawn't stand for this, doncherknow," says Sir Cyril, and then the light of battle flamed in his pale blue eyes just as it must have flamed in the eyes of big Sir Arthur Putney when somebody's gauntlet was throwed at his feet.

"A rescue! A rescue!" shouts Sir Cyril, pilin' out of the sheep wagon. "The Dolorous Knight and the Knight of the Cheerful Countenance to the rescue!"

I yells the same thing and follers him, and we runs for our hosses, with our chain shirts clinkin' and our armor clankin,' and our swords bangin' against our legs. Sufferin' bobcats! I ain't heard such a racket since the Two-Bar mess wagon run away and scattered the cook's tin dishes all over a prairie dog town.

Onc't in the saddle I took a look around and savvied the situation at a glance. They was six men down in the bunch of sheep, a-shootin' right and left with their revolvers. They hadn't bothered to give us more'n them two shots through the top of the sheep wagon, thinkin', no doubt, that we would just curl up and lay quiet till they had killed all the sheep, when they would probably come up and burn our outfit and chase us outen the country.

I pulled down my visor, and, wavin' my lance, started my hoss on the jump for the sheep. At that I was a long ways behind

Sir Cyril, who had moved quicker'n I ever thought possible. He was a tall man and lean, and he made somethin' of a figger as he went clippity-clip and clankety-clank ahead of me, bouncin' fully two feet outen his saddle at every jump, and with a long black plume a streamin' over his helmet and his shield braced ag'in his left arm and his lance couched in his right.

I must have made just as stirrin' a sight, for I was goin' through the same performance a few rods behind Sir Cyril. But I reckon the cattlemen who was conductin' the raid didn't feel much like laughin' when they looked up and seen a cross section of the Middle Ages comin' down on them like an avalanche. It must jar a man's brain processes summut to be engaged in a piece of up-to-date mischief like sheep killin' and then find himself called to account by a couple of locos who look as if they had stepped right outen a King Arthur story-book. Anyway, them sheep-killers stood with their mouths open as much as a full minit before they realized they'd have to be throwin' some lead in our direction if they hoped to make a getaway. They had left their bronchos in a clump of cottonwoods near by, and had gone at the work of sheep-slaughterin' on foot. Every man jack of 'em wore a mask, and, from the handy way they was killin' the sheep, I was willin' to bet it wasn't the fust job of the kind they had tackled.

In a minit the bullets begin buzzin' around us. One of 'em whined out of disapp'intment when it struck my iron shield and went singin' off into the atmosphere, and I could hear 'em doin' the same when they glanced off Sir Cyril's boiler plate clothes. Not one of 'em struck fair enough to go through, though occasionally one'd give me a stingin' sensation when it'd glance off an arm or leg. But it was just like shootin' at frogs with a squirt gun for all the real harm that was done, and them six cowmen begin to realize that things was some serious when each one of 'em had emptied a gun and chivalry was still in the saddle.

The sheep had scattered and run off the range, and the cowmen was left standin' alone in the draw. They turned and run for their horses, in the hope of gettin' the rifles they had left in their saddle scabbards. The story might have been different if they had got them big guns, but as it was we had turned it into a Dark Ages picnic in five minits. There never was a cowboy that could run

a lick on earth on foot, anyhow, and in a jiffy Sir Cyril had caught up with the hindmost one.

"Die, caitiff!" he yells, and the point of his lance goes through the cowboy's clothes, somewhere betwixt the belt and skin, and buries itself in the ground. There was a shock and the splinterin' of wood, and Sir Cyril's hoss nearly went over, and the lance was busted plum in two. As for the cowboy, he laid on the ground, gettin' cuss-words all mixed up with howls of pain, for he had slivers enough in him to keep a needle-expert busy a week.

By this time I had caught up with one of the sheep-killers, and, instid of puncturin' him with my lance, I lifted the point as I went past and give the misguided yokel a kick with my iron-pointed shoe, which sent him spinnin' off into the sagebrush as dazed as a jackrabbit that had figgered in a collision with a kyote.

I seen Sir Cyril lay out two more, usin' his busted lance as a battle ax, and I took care of another who was down on his knees in a cactus bed gibberin' like a prairie dog. That left one raider — a big feller who was evidently the leader of the outfit. He had done some purty fair sprintin', and had reached his hoss, with Sir Cyril thunderin' a few rods behind him.

My heart sure stood still when I seen that sheep-killer take keerful aim and fire. Then I purty near yelled my head off for joy, as Sir Cyril kept right on, simply reelin' in his saddle a little when that heavy bullet glanced off his helmet. The feller tried to dodge, but he might as well tried dodgin' a thunderbolt. Down come the lance on his head, and by the time the Dolorous Knight had wheeled for another charge it was a sick raider who was tryin' to get up outen the dust, with a rifle so badly jammed that it wouldn't pump worth a cent.

When I rode up Sir Cyril had dismounted and was standin' with his foot on the raider's chest and his sword at the feller's throat.

"Yield thee, false knight, or I slay thee in accordance with the rules of the lists," he was bellowin', and I believe if I hadn't pulled him away there'd have been murder done, as all the raider could holler was "'Nuff," and Sir Cyril didn't recognize the Missouri translation of the word surrender.

We came near havin' our first falling out, Sir Cyril and me,

over the question of disposin' of them prisoners of war. Sir Cyril wanted to load them with wagon-brake chains and keep 'em a few years in an underground dungeon which he proposed diggin' in an adjoinin' mesa which greatly resembled a castle. I finally persuaded him, however, that the best plan'd be to treat 'em as their kind treats sheep herders. So we kep' their hosses and saddles as spoils of war, and then we turned 'em loose afoot, with warnin's as to what'd happen if we caught 'em on our baronial sheep range ag'in, after which we gathered up our scattered bunch, and found there wasn't over twenty missin'.

Sir Cyril wanted me to go with him on a raid in the country of the cattle barons, where he said there were many wicked knights to be slain and much spoil to be taken by two such doughty knights as we had proved to be. In fact, he was worse conceited over the outcome of our fight than an Injun who has been on as a successful hoss stealin' raid. He wanted to boast of our deeds all the while, and he kep' enlargin' the affair until finally it was nothin' short of an army we had licked.

I seen if things drifted along that way much longer we would both be fightin' chimerys in a padded cell, so I wrote to some of Sir Cyril's relatives in England, where it seems there had been an estate waitin' for him ever since he disappeared after the bust-up of the cow business. When he learned that he was to get a ruined castle and seventeen more suits of armor, and a gallery full of ancestral portraits, he consented to go.

"But, O Knight of the Cheerful Countenance," he says to me when we had our last handshake at the railroad station, "it grieves me sore to think that thou wilt not come and dwell with me, for full many a gallant adventure might we have in England's forests, though perhaps no such glorious victory as our battle with the hosts from the cattle baron's castle."

But I knowed better than to accept, as I figgered that the loco'd leave both of us, if we herded alone — and particularly in Sir Cyril's case if he went to a country where there ain't such pure air and magnificent distances to fire a man's imagination.

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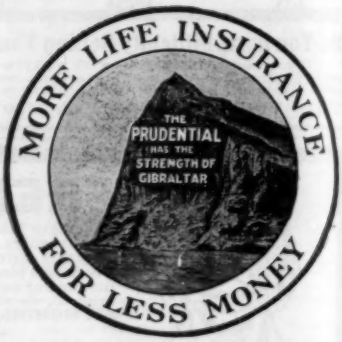

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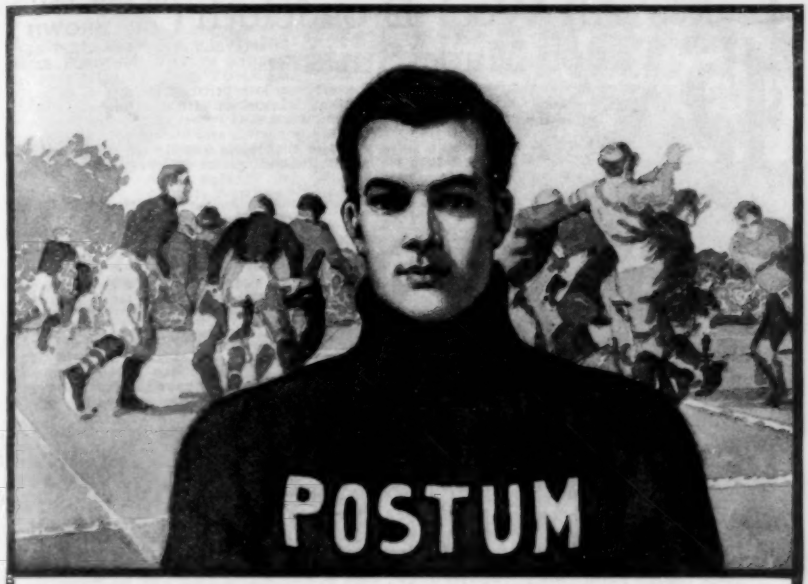

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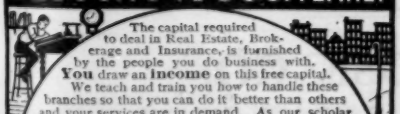

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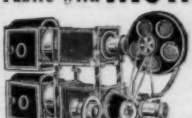

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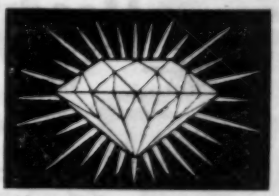

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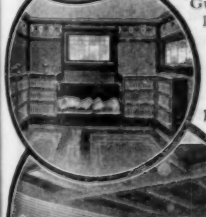

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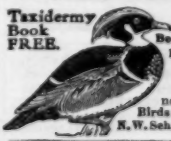

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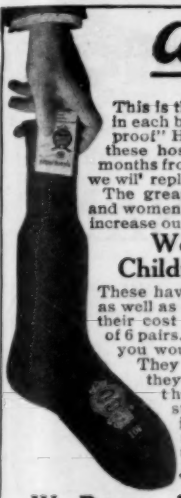

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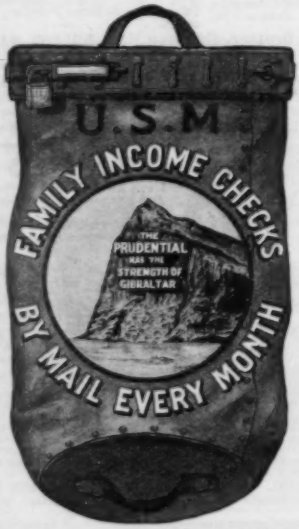

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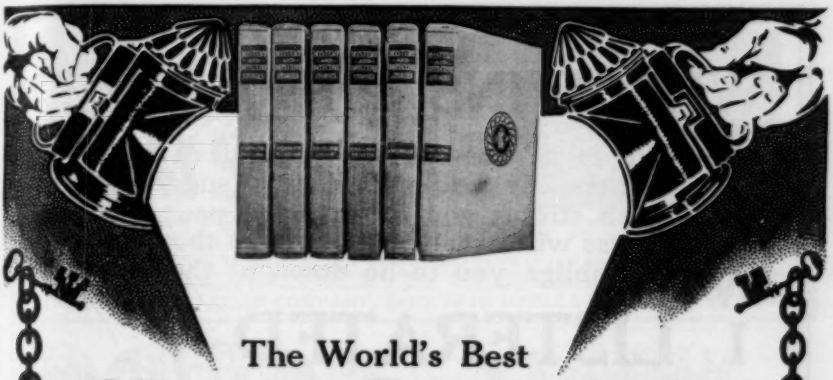

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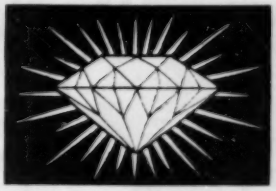

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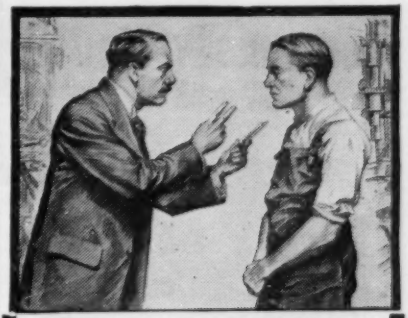

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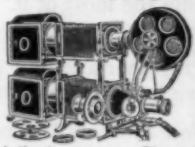

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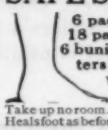

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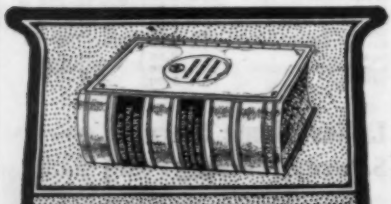

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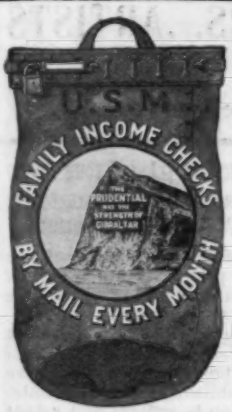

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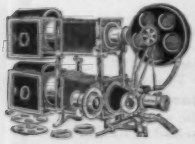

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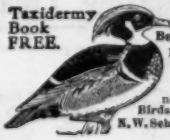

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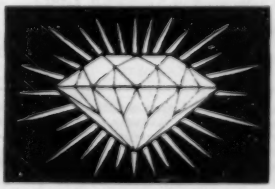

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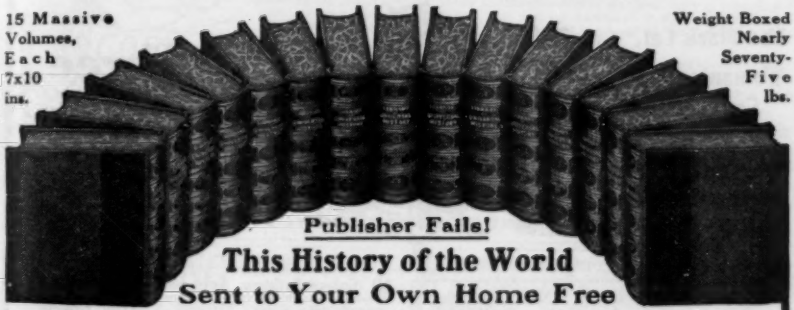

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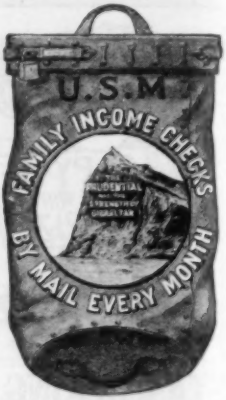

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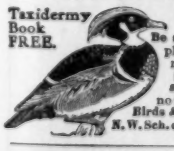

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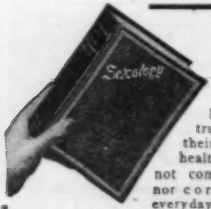

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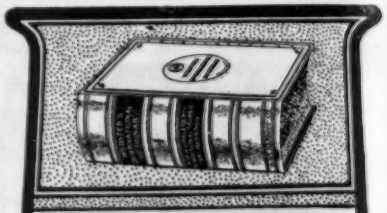

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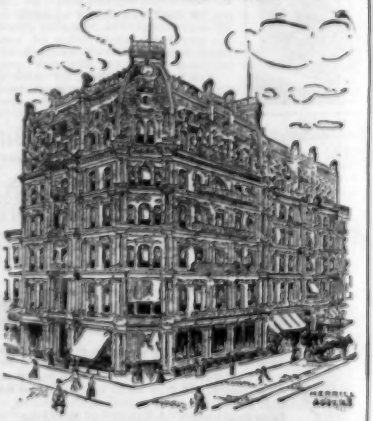

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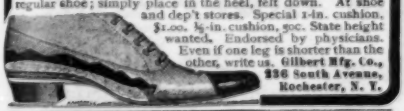

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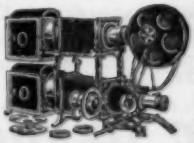

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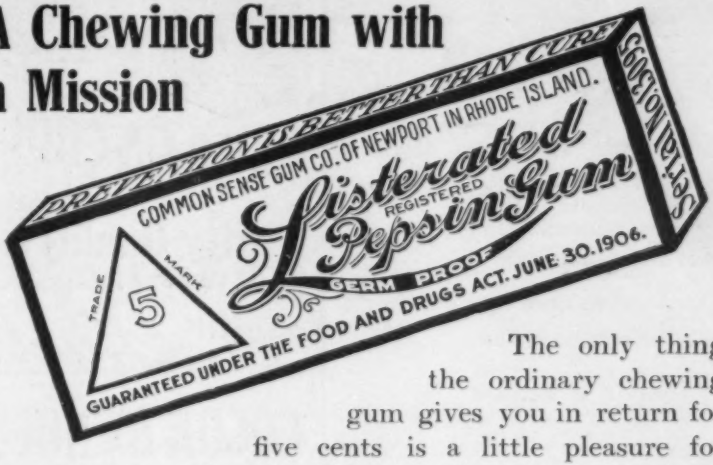
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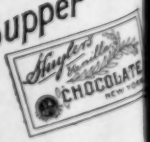

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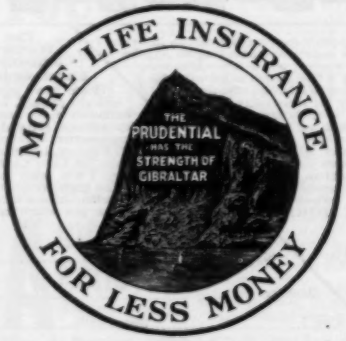

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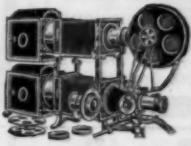

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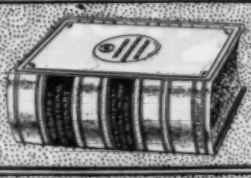

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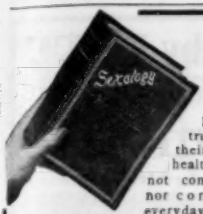

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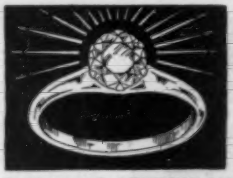

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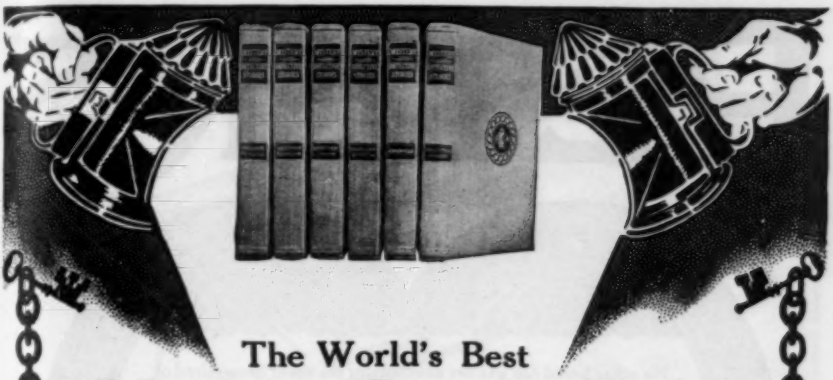

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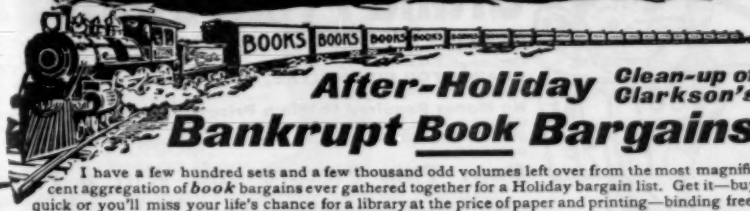

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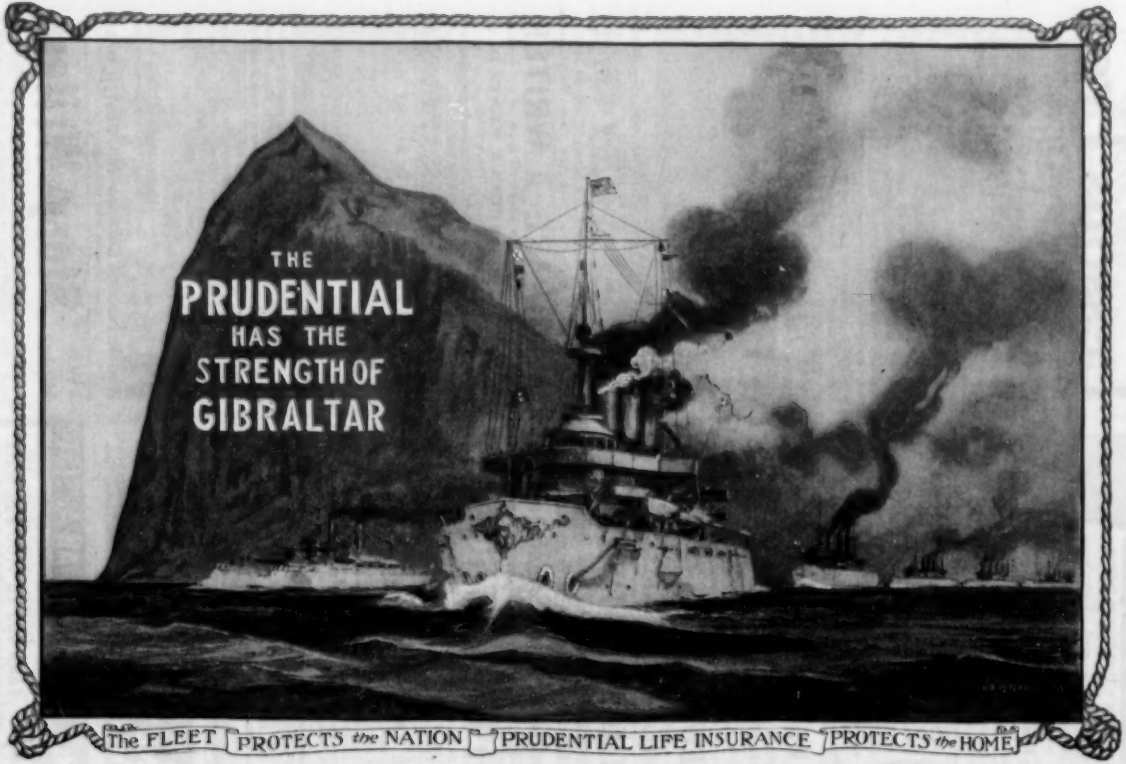

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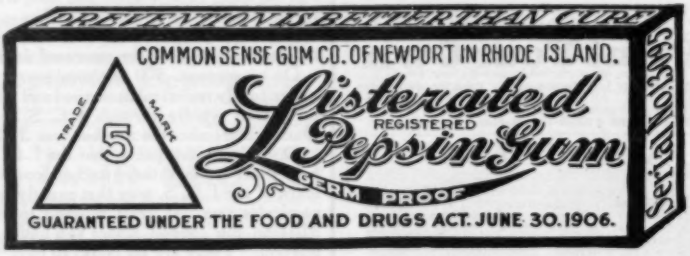

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Rex Beach

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"**The Sins of Society,**" by Mr. Joseph Medill Patterson, author of "A Little Brother of the Rich."

"**Why Girls go Astray,**" by Edwin W. Sims. Mr. Sims states he has received many letters from fathers and mothers since he began writing for **Woman's World,** whose fears and suspicions "were aroused by the warning that the girl who left her home in the country, gone up to the city and does not come home to visit, needs to be looked up." These cases have been investigated and some of the results are published in his article, "Why Girls Go Astray."

"**Wolves That Prey on Women,**" by Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago.

"**A Word About Wayward Girls,**" by Mrs. Orphelia L. Amigh, Superintendent Illinois State Training School for Girls.

"**Binding Up the Broken-Hearted,**" by Maud Ballington Booth of the Volunteers of America. An original article telling some interesting facts and experiences of her work among the men and women.

"**Should Girls Be Permitted to Marry Old Men?**" by Rosetta.

"**The Christian Science Faith,**" by Mrs. Clara Louise Burnham.

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George Ade

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Geo. Barr McCutcheon

"**Terrors of the Way of Shame,**" by Mrs. Ophelia L. Amigh.

"**Better Education On the Sex Question,**" by Judge Julien W. Mack.

"**How to Protect Our Girls,**" Harry A. Parkin, the Assistant U.S. District Attorney of Chicago.

Postmaster-Gen. G. Von L. Meyer, in an article every American citizen should read.

"**White Slavery In America,**" by Hon. Charles Nelson Crittenton.

"**The Prison Disgrace of America,**" by Mrs. Florence Maybrick.

"**The Bitter Cup,**" by Cy Warman.

Hon. Robert La Follette, on "The Rights and Wrongs of Women."

"**A Child of the West,**" by Charles N. Crewdson.

"**A Revolution In Practical Education,**" by Hon. Willett M. Hays.

"**Saving Waste in School Years,**" by Hon. Edwin C. Cooley.

"**Christian Marriages,**" by Cardinal Gibbons.

"**The Gloaming Ghosts,**" a new two-part story by George Barr McCutcheon.

Three short stories by CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY. Two short stories by REX BEACH. New musical hits by ABE HOLZMAN, FELIX F. FEIST, JOEL P. CORIN, MABEL M'KINLEY, and others. Six love mystery stories by JAQUES FUTRELLE. Serial by ROY NORTON. "The Old Homestead," by DENMAN THOMPSON. "Odd Family Life in Foreign Lands," by BURTON HOLMES. "The Romance of the Cave Man," six related short stories by STANLEY WATERLOO. "New Arkansas Traveler Stories", by OPIE READ. "A Maid of Millions," by ONE. "What Is Sweeter Than Irish Music," a new song by CHAUNCEY OLCOTT. "The Story of a Simple Life," by MAUD RADFORD WARREN. Two thrilling boy stories, by DWIGHT MITCHELL WILEY. Stories by ROSWELL FIELD, ELLIOTT FLOWER, HENRY M. HYDE, HERBERT QUICK, and many, many others.

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THE AUTHORITIES. The above is based on official and technical reports and analyses by the following authorities: Professor M. W. Twitchell, Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins), University of South Carolina; Dr. Eugene A. Smith, State Geologist, Alabama; S. S. Evans, C. E., formerly U. S. Nicaragua Survey; Professor H. Nielson, Ph.D., E. M. (Heidelberg University); Professor Richard K. Meade, Meade Laboratories, Nazareth, Pa.

THE PROFITS. The cement industry is one of the most profitable in the world. The dividends range from 20% to 40% a year. The Iola Portland Cement Co., which gave 100% stock bonus to secure funds to build its plant, paid 32% last year, and its net earnings are one hundred thousand dollars a month. The Coplay Cement Company has paid 32% for years. The Wolverine Portland Cement Co. paid 26% in dividends last year. The Peninsular Portland Cement Co. is earning money for its stockholders at the rate of one thousand dollars a day.

THE OFFER. For the equipment of a plant to be in operation in six months, with a capacity of three thousand barrels of Portland Cement daily, the Company offers 6% First Mortgage Gold Bonds at par, $100, interest payable January 1st and July 1st. Every bond sold under this offer will carry a bonus of $100 in full paid, non-assessable stock of the Company, which is limited to 6% dividend a year until the bonds have been redeemed. After that the stock will, in all human probability, pay at least from 20% to 30% annually. Behind this bond issue are assets exceeding seven million dollars.

and Your Grandchildren

THE MEN AT THE HEAD. The President, Wm. B. Shaffer, has built a number of cement plants and they are all money makers. He is the biggest man in the cement business, and has made more men rich in Portland Cement than any other man in America. The Treasurer, R. E. Schneebeli, is Director of the Second National Bank, Nazareth, Pa. H. K. Hartzell, one of the Directors of the Company, is Director of the Lehigh Valley Trust Company, Allentown, Pa. Another Director is John S. Osterstock, Director Easton National Bank, Easton, Pa. Other Directors are Hon. Watt T. Brown, President Ragland Coal Company, Ragland, Ala., and Wm. A. Arnold, Director Citizens Trust Company, Paterson, N. J.

Depository: International Trust Co., Boston. Trustee for Bonds: Fidelity Trust Co., Philadelphia. Registrar of Stock: Union Trust Co., Philadelphia. Transfer Agent: The Colonial Trust Co., Philadelphia.

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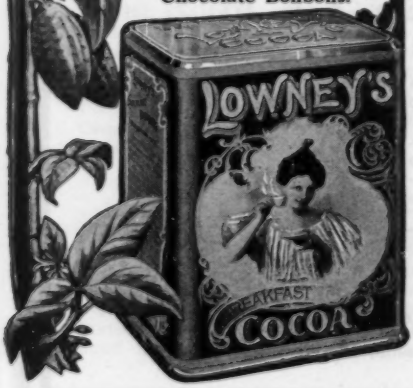

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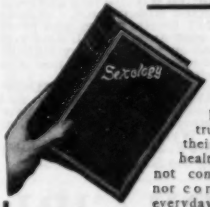

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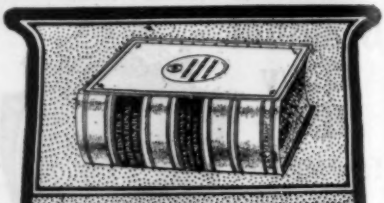

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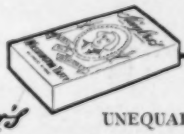

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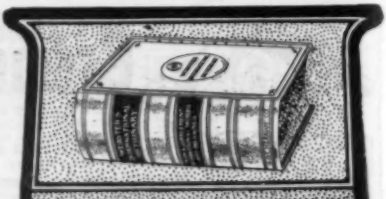

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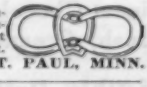

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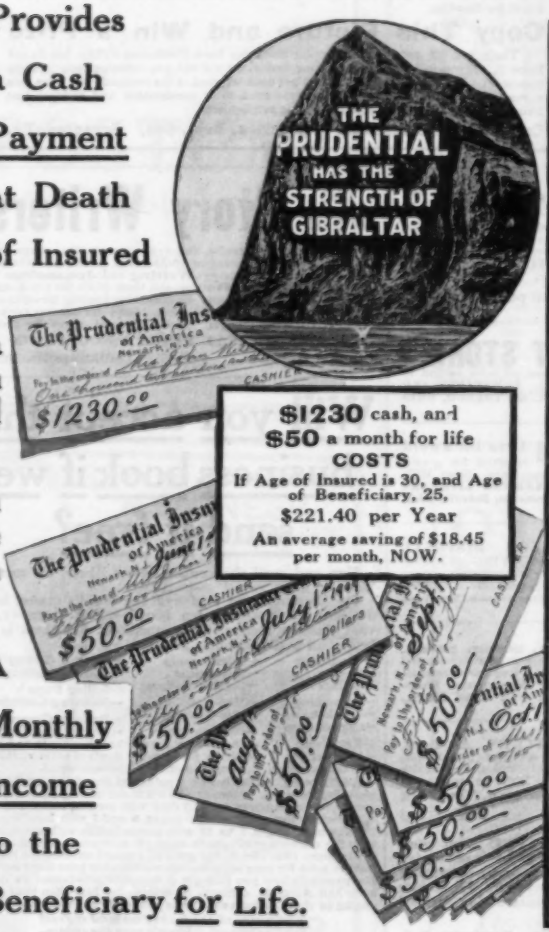

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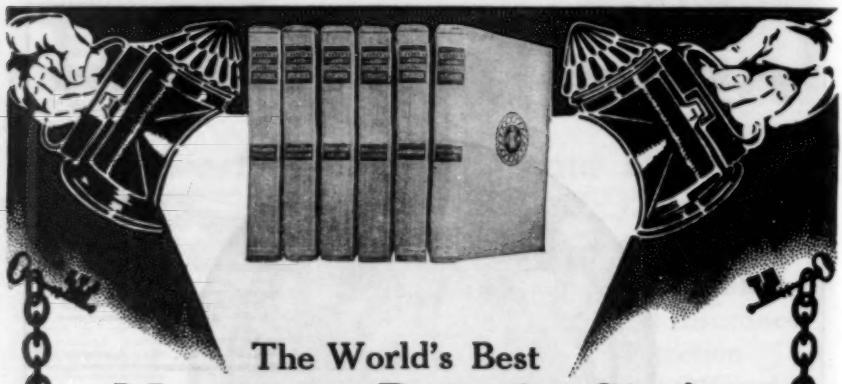

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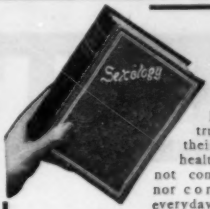

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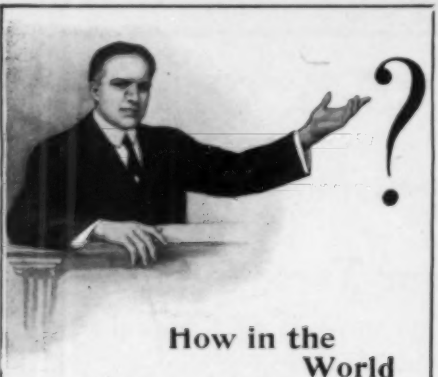

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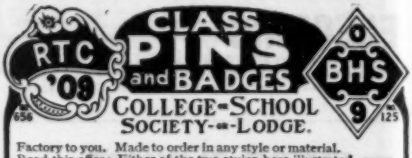

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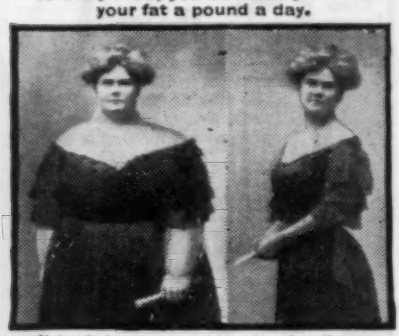

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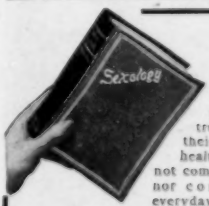

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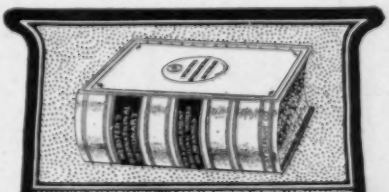

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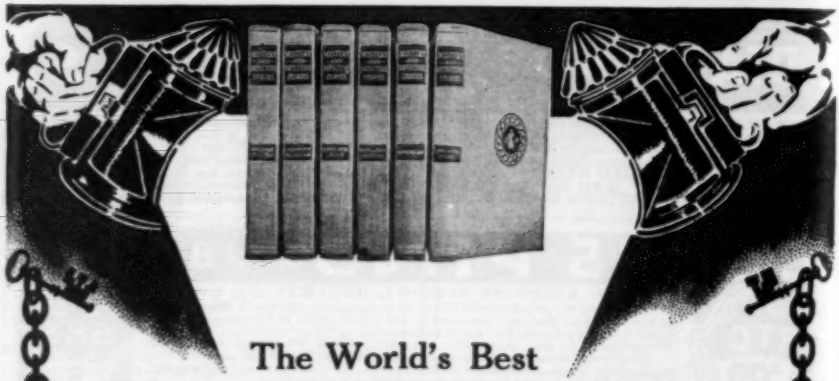

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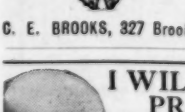

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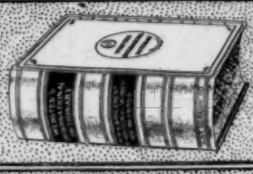

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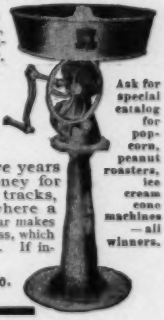

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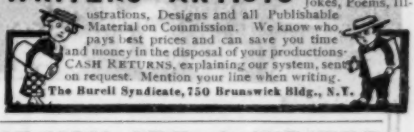

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